Mobility, Pathology and Livelihoods: An Ethnography of Forms of Human Mobility in/from Nepal

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis titled 'Mobility, Pathology and Livelihoods: An Ethnography of Forms of Human Mobility in/from Nepal' represents my own work and has not been previously submitted to this or any other institution for any degree, diploma or other qualification.

Jeevan Raj Sharma

June 2007

Abstract

This thesis is a study of human mobility in the context of violent socio-political conflict in the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal. Its main purpose is to examine the implications of forms of mobility as evaluated and categorised by the people themselves as a means through which to understand the paradox and politics in international development. It also contributes to scholarship on socio-cultural dimensions of mobility by exemplifying a particular form of mobility in relation to masculinity. The main question addressed is: how do we understand the disjuncture in international development that mobility, despite being one of the most significant aspects of Nepali society, has so far remained rather implicit and pathological? This question was addressed through an examination of a range of ethnographic evidence on mobility in/from Nepal. It involved a year long period of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in the western hills of Nepal including tracing the experience of several individuals and households who moved out of the area both within and outside of Nepal, particularly the young men who travelled to find work opportunities in the Indian city of Mumbai. Further, data were collected from selected development agencies with the intention of seeking a treatment of mobility in their policies, programmes and implementation.

In bringing together empirical evidence on the interface between the development discourses on mobility and forms of mobility, as evaluated and categorized by the people themselves, this thesis contributes to the ethnographic literature on the disjuncture and politics in international development. The thesis shows the ubiquitous presence and importance of mobility in the livelihoods of the people in the hills of Nepal. When mobility is a rule and not an exception, as seen in this ethnography, then social scientists need to rethink the 'field' and 'population' they work with, leaving open the possibility of understanding social life as mobile and complex in its relationship to rural livelihoods.

Key words: migration, livelihoods, masculinity, ethnography, development, HIV/AIDS, discourses, governmentality, Nepal

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Note on Use of Nepali Words and Currency

Nepali words are transliterated and written in roman type. I follow Turner ([1931]1990) for a transliteration practice. Patronyms, ethnic groups, caste and place names have been given a simplified transcription.

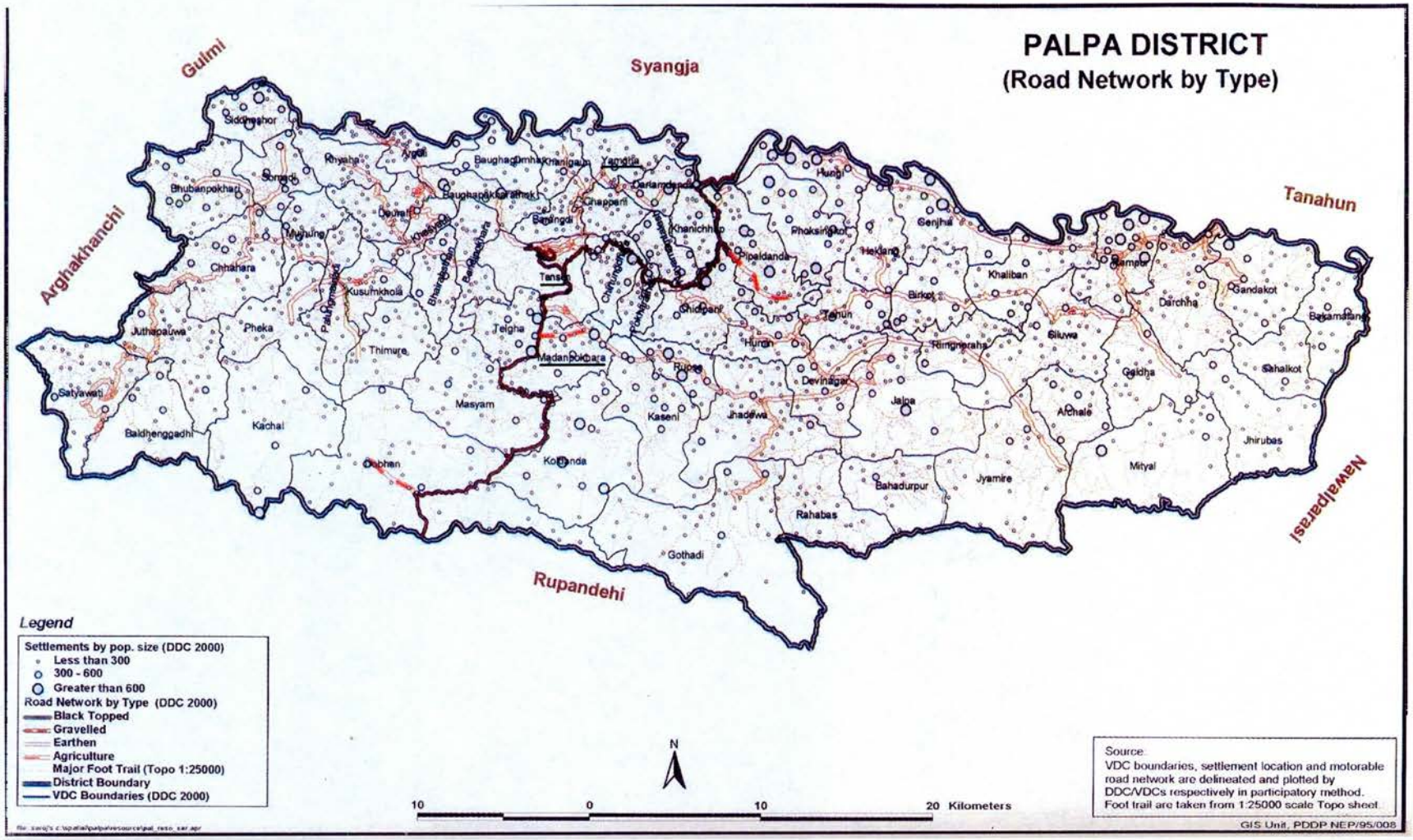
At the time of conducting the fieldwork, one British Pound was equivalent to Nepali Rupees (NRs) 130 and Indian Rupees (IRs) 88.

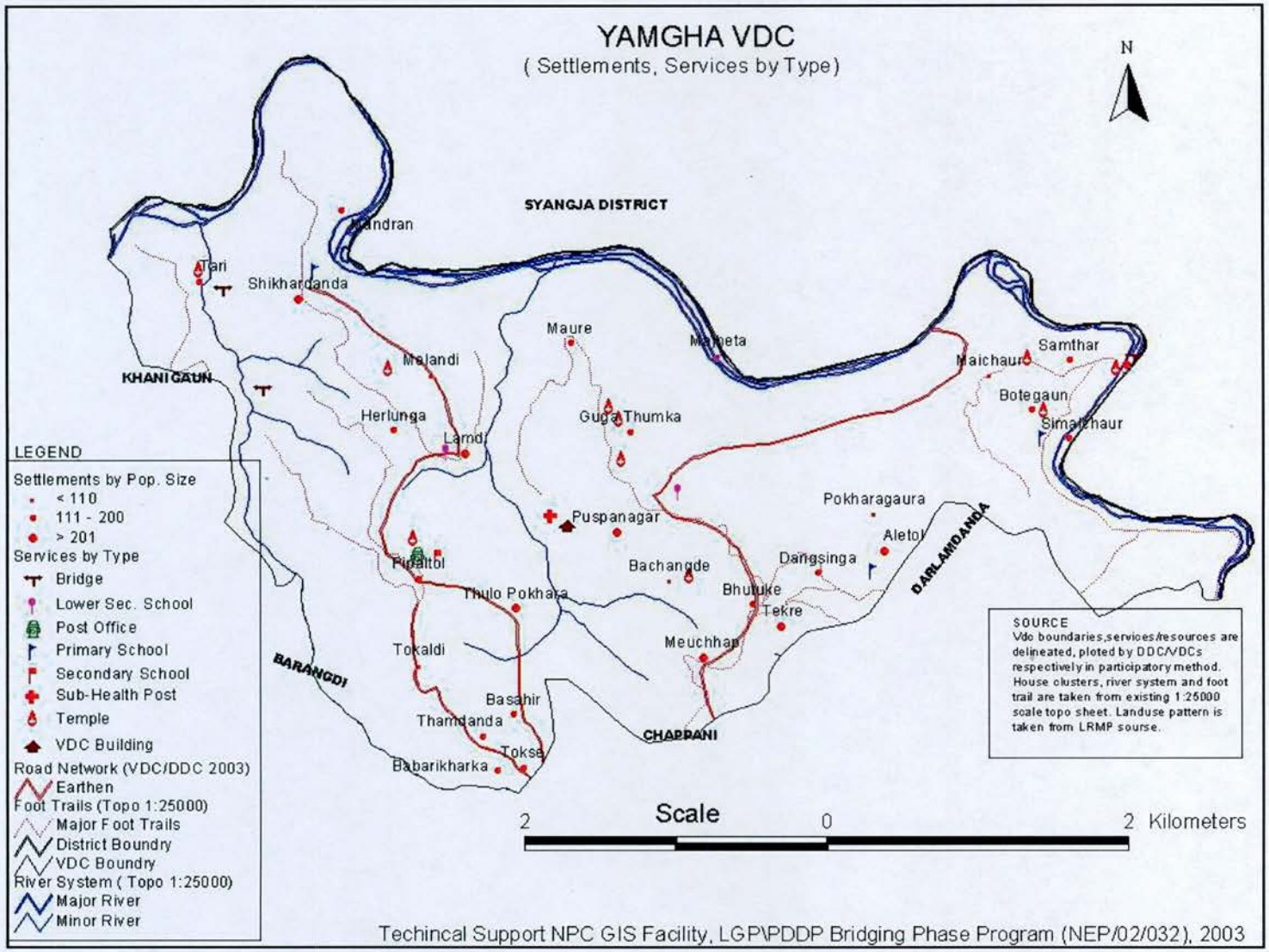
List of Abbreviations

ADB	:	Asian Development Bank
AIDS	:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AIDSCAP	:	AIDS Control and Prevention Project
AmFAR	:	American Foundation for AIDS Research
APP	:	Agricultural Perspective Plan
BNAC	:	Britain Nepal Academic Council
CBOs	:	Community Based Organisations
CBS	:	Central Bureau of Statistics
CDO	:	Chief District Officer
CEDA	:	Centre for Economic Development and Administration
CHP	:	Community Health and Development Programme
DAO	:	District Administration Office
DDC	:	District Development Committee
DFID	:	Department for International Development
DIC	:	Drop-in-Centre
FAO	:	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FHI	:	Family Health International
FM	:	Frequency Modulated (radio)
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	:	Human Immuno Deficiency Virus
HMG/N	:	His Majesty's Government of Nepal
ICIMOD	:	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IMF	:	International Monetary Fund
INGOs	:	International Non-Governmental Organisations
INSN	:	International Nepal Solidarity Network
IRs	:	Indian Rupees
JICA	:	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LISP	:	Local Initiative Support Programme
NC	:	Nepali Congress

NCASC	:	National Centre for AIDS and STD Control
NGOs	:	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIDS	:	Nepal Institute of Development Studies
NLSS	:	Nepal Living Standards Survey
NPC	:	National Planning Commission
NRs	:	Nepali Rupees
NTV	:	Nepal Television
PDP	:	Palpa Development Programme
RNA	:	Royal Nepali Army
SHP	:	Sub-health Post
SLC	:	School Leaving Certificate
STI	:	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TISS	:	Tata Institute of Social Sciences
TWP	:	Tinau Watershed Project
UML	:	United Marxist-Leninists
UMN	:	United Mission to Nepal
UN	:	United Nations
UNAIDS	:	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
USAID		United States Agency for International Development
USOM	:	U.S. Operations Mission
VARG	:	Valley Research Group
VCT	:	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
VDC	:	Village Development Committee
VHW	:	Village Health Worker
WB	:	World Bank


Palpa in relation to Nepal
Far Western
Mid Western
Western
Central
Eastern
Area (Sq.Km.) 148,197
Regions 5
Districts 75
Constituencies 205
Ilakas 927
Municipalities 58
VDCs 3,914
Wards 36,023
a Kathmandu
b Lalitpur
c Bhaktapur
Legend
Municipalities (MLD, 1999)
Metropolitan City
Sub-metropolitan City
Municipality
Boundaries (Topo, 1:10,00,000)
International
Regional
District
1 Kathmandu Metropolitan City
2 Kirtipur Municipality
3 Lalitpur Sub-metropolitan City
4 Bhaktapur Municipality
5 Madhyapur (Thimi) Municipality
N
50 0 50 100 Kilometers
NPC GIS Facility, LPBPP, 2004
HUMLA
DARCHULA
BAJHANG
BAJURA
MUGU
BAITADI
DADELDHURA
DOTI
ACHHAM
KALIKOT
JUMLA
DOLPA
DAILEKH
JAJARKOT
MUSTANG
KANCHANPUR
KAILALI
RUKUM
MANANG
SURKHET
BARDIA
SALYAN
MYAGDI
ROLPA
BAGLUNG
KASKI
LAMJUNG
GORKHA
RASUWA
BANKE
PYUTHAN
GULMI
PARBAT
SYANGJA
DANG
ARGHAKHANCHI
TANAHU
NUWAKOT
SINDHUPALCHOK
DOLKHA
SOLUKHUMBU
DHADING
PALPA
KAPILBASTU
BUTWAL
RUPANDEHI
BHAIRAHAWA
NAWAL PARASI
MAKWANPUR
KABRE
SANKHUWASABHA
TAPLEJUNG
CHITWAN
RAMECHHAP
OKHALDHUNGA
PARSA
SINDHULI
KHOTANG
BHOJPUR
BARA
RAUTHAT
SARLAHI
MAHOTARI
DHANUSA
UDAYAPUR
TEHRATHUM
PANCHTHAR
DHANKUTA
ILAM
SIRAHA
SAPTARI
SUNSARI
MORANG
JHAPA


PALPA DISTRICT
(Road Network by Type)
Gulmi
Syangja
Tanahun
Arghakhanchi
Nawalparasi
Rupandehi
Siddheshor
Bhubanpokhari
Mathung
Chhahara
Kusumkhola
Pheka
Thimure
Satyawati
Baldhengadhi
Kachal
Masyam
Oobhan
Kotanda
Gothadi
Rahabas
Bahadurpur
Jyamire
Mityal
Jhirubas
Archale
Jalpa
Devinagar
Ruiseni
Kaseni
Jhadewa
Human
Tenga
Madanpokhara
Ghiddhare
Tansen
Khanichhap
Pipaldanda
Phoksingkot
Hekang
Genjha
Hunli
Khaliban
Birkot
Rampur
Darchha
Gandakot
Besamadang
Siluwa
Ramgaraha
Galdha
Sahalkot
Legend
Settlements by pop. size (DDC 2000)
Less than 300
300 - 600
Greater than 600
Road Network by Type (DDC 2000)
Black Topped
Gravelled
Earthen
Agriculture
Major Foot Trail (Topo 1:25000)
District Boundary
VDC Boundaries (DDC 2000)
N
10 0 10 20 Kilometers
Source:
VDC boundaries, settlement location and motorable road network are delineated and plotted by DDC/VDCs respectively in participatory method.
Foot trail are taken from 1:25000 scale Topo sheet.
GIS Unit, PDDP NEP/95/008


YAMGHA VDC
(Settlements, Services by Type)
N
SYANGJA DISTRICT
Mandran
Tari
Shikhardanda
KHANIGAUN
Maure
Majheta
Malandi
Herlunga
Lamdi
Guga Thumka
Maichaur
Samthar
Botegaun
Simalchaur
Pokharagaura
Aletol
Puspanagar
Pipaltol
Bachangde
Dangsinga
DARLAMDANDA
Thulo Pokhara
Bhutuke
Tekre
Meuchhap
Tokaldi
BARANGDI
Basahir
Thamdanda
Toksa
Babarikharka
CHAPPANI
LEGEND
Settlements by Pop. Size
< 110
111 - 200
> 201
Services by Type
Bridge
Lower Sec. School
Post Office
Primary School
Secondary School
Sub-Health Post
Temple
VDC Building
Road Network (VDC/DDC 2003)
Earthen
Foot Trails (Topo 1:25000)
Major Foot Trails
District Boundry
VDC Boundry
River System (Topo 1:25000)
Major River
Minor River
SOURCE
Vdc boundaries,services/resources are delineated, ploted by DDC/VDCs respectively in participatory method. House clusters, river system and foot trail are taken from existing 1:25000 scale topo sheet. Landuse pattern is taken from LRMP sourse.
2
Scale
0
2 Kilometers
Techincal Support NPC GIS Facility, LGP\PDDP Bridging Phase Program (NEP/02/032), 2003

Chapter I

The "problem" of human mobility

> Meet Lal Bahadur Kadal. He was thinking of migrating to India for work like most of his fellow villagers have done. But instead, through our support, he participated in seed production training and received vegetable seed. He then organized himself and 11 other local farmers into a Seed Producer Group. With our further support, the Group was introduced to seed traders throughout the country.
> In their first year of operation the Group produced and sold around 1 metric tonne of seed. This increased to 7 mt the year after, and in 2005, the Group are contracted to produce 14 mt. The number of seed growers in the village has increased too; there are now 175 members in the Group.
> Lal Bahadur earned almost £1,000 from selling radish seed this year, more than 8 times higher than Nepal's per capita income.
> (Source:http://www.dfid.gov.uk/casestudies/files/asia/nepal-seeds.asp, accessed 15 May 2005)

I am starting this thesis with a case study found in the webpages of the Department for International Development (DFID) to illustrate the context of my thesis. The quote presents the success story of Lal Bahadur, a Nepali man, who instead of migrating to work in India, participated in a seed production training funded by DFID. This resulted in him earning eight times more than the per capita income of Nepal. The case study shows the framework in which the 'success' of Lal Bahadur's life is produced within the context of development discourse. This framework reflects the 'authoritative' discourses on rural development that represent Nepal as an immobile society dependent on agriculture and natural resources and implicitly problematize mobility as an unusual feature of people's livelihoods in the hills of Nepal. Furthermore, the framework represents mobility as an economic venture.

This thesis is about human mobility as a 'problem'. First, it provides a critique of the 'authoritative' development discourses that consider mobility as a problem. Second, it presents somewhat contrasting ethnographic evidence where mobility is not a problem but a usual part of people's livelihoods. There is historical and ethnographic evidence that Nepalis have long been a mobile population; mobility of different types

is a part of life experience for a very large number of Nepalis. Despite this evidence, the growth of communication, travel, the changing political economy and development have meant that the forms and meanings of mobility have changed, opening up new possibilities for those who move and those left behind. In the last 10 years, it has been further complicated by the ongoing conflict and escalating violence in the hills of Nepal, forcing a large number of people to move out of their villages.

Despite the fact that almost all the social scientists working in the hills of Nepal have noted mobility in their fieldwork, there is a significant gap in our knowledge on several aspects of mobility, particularly from the people's perspective. Recent scholarship on Nepal has produced some useful macro level data on the estimation of the number of migrant workers and their remittances (Regmi and Tisdell, 2002, Seddon et al., 2002). Likewise, a few influential studies have indicated the importance of mobility in the livelihoods of the people and in social change at large (Blaikie et al., 2002, Macfarlane, 2001, Shrestha, 1990). In recent years, a few scholars have studied mobility from the livelihoods perspective providing useful insights into how people make decisions about movement and consider social, economic and cultural factors that shape their mobility (Adhikari, 2001, Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1995, Thieme, 2006). Additional studies provide some useful insights into the meaning of some forms of mobility and their relationships to ethnic identity (Adhikari, 1993, Daryn, 2003, Des Chene, 1991, Fisher, 2001, Russell, 2000).

While the existing scholarship has produced some useful data on different forms of mobility in/from Nepal, they are treated separately without considering the fluid boundary between different forms of mobility. For instance, there exist separate bodies of knowledge on hill-*terāi*[1] migration, international labour migration, displacement, trafficking, pilgrimage or runaway children (often discussed under the issues of child labour and street children). The available studies indicate, however, that what is largely missing is the discussion and analysis of different forms of mobility from a socio-cultural dimension, based on how people themselves

[1] The low-lying land at the foot of the Himalayas.

experience and perceive them.[2] For instance, there is a general agreement that a large number of men from the hills of Nepal travel to Indian cities or the Gulf in search of work opportunities, but we do not know how far this experience shapes the identity of the men who move or those left behind.

Furthermore, the problematic conception of mobility that we find in the policy discourses, as seen in the quote above, is equally evident in some of the influential scholarly work on Nepal whereby it has been largely represented as aberrant, and a threat to the hill economy, society and culture. It is often viewed as an exception and often a crisis, frequently leading to some other crisis. It is not known how such a conception is constructed or put into practice.

A review of the existing studies shows that the existing knowledge on mobility in Nepal is patchy with very little ethnographic understanding of the meanings of mobility and how it affects the lives of individuals and households. At the same time, we are confronted with development discourses that attempt to represent people's livelihoods within the bounded unit of the village and conceive mobility as a problem. Nepal offers a suitable case study to bring together a range of evidence both on how people themselves evaluate and categorise mobility and how authoritative development discourses attempt to problematize mobility. Too often this approach is undermined by failing to contest the problematic nature of existing categories and typologies of mobility, and analyse these in relation to the authoritative discourses that produce powerful representations, interventions and practices.

Purpose and research questions

The main purpose of this study is to unravel the disjuncture between the authoritative development discourses that attempt to problematize human mobility and mobile people and the untidy reality of mobility that forms an important part of people's life

[2] I review studies relating to migraton and mobility relevant to this thesis in Chapter III.

and livelihoods. It examines the implication of mobility as evaluated and categorized by the people themselves to help understand this paradox in international development and to developing a new understanding of Nepali society beyond its immobile conception.

The central research questions, thus, are as follows:

- How might we understand the authoritative development discourses that pathologize human mobility and mobile people? What are their implications for conceiving Nepali hill society in this way?
- Is the concept of governmentality useful to understand these conceptions and their implications?
- How are these pathological tendencies reflected in the actual development practice? What might this tell us about the relationship between policy and practice?
- What are some of the different forms of human mobility in/from Nepal as constructed and categorized by the people themselves? What are the implications of these for understanding the existing categories and typologies of mobility, and for understanding the life among the hill population in Nepal?
- How far does recently emerging scholarship on masculinities help us to understand the meanings and experiences of mobility of young Nepali men who travel to India?
- How do we understand the disjuncture in international development that mobility, despite being one of the most significant aspects of Nepali society, has so far remained rather implicit and pathological?

In answering these questions, this thesis aims to contribute towards developing the field of human mobility from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Key concepts

I will discuss five different concepts (mobility, discourse, governmentality, livelihoods and masculinity) as a means of understanding the research questions outlined above. Throughout this thesis, I aim to bring together these concepts and ethnographic data to address the research questions outlined above.

Mobility

I use the concept of mobility as a means through which to open up possibilities beyond the existing categories and theories in migration studies, so as to consider different forms of human mobility as constructed and categorized by the people themselves. I do this by using the theoretical perspective of social construction where meanings are socially constructed and sustained through social activity (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The actors in their social interaction in a social system form mental representations of each other's actions. This implies that people's conception of meaning is embedded into the structure of society. The perspective of social construction is useful for understanding the meanings and experiences of different forms of mobility in/from Nepal. It offers an opportunity to examine the grounded perspectives on such mobility and its implication for how people construct the meanings of mobility in relation to their life and livelihoods. Considering different forms of mobility under the same framework allows us to explore the untidy reality of mobility and question the immobile conception of a rural population. Let us now look at three problems with existing categories in migration studies to allow us to consider how people construct meanings of different forms of human mobility.

First, the existing literature deals with different forms of human mobility separately. It is either characterized by the length of time involved (seasonal, cyclical, permanent, temporary) or in terms of distance (internal, international) or in terms of spatial direction (rural-urban, urban-rural, rural-rural) or in terms of motivation (voluntary, forced) or in terms of history (pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial) and so on (Gardner and Osella, 2004, Spencer, 2004, Massey, 1998). There is a strong

tendency to treat different forms of mobility as separate and isolated from each other, which fails to consider the fluid boundaries between one form of mobility and the other. Likewise, there is a tendency to contrast the forms of mobility—internal versus international, rural to urban versus urban to rural, temporary versus permanent and so on. For instance, there is a lot of literature on migration which is either concerned with internal or international migration, and not both. Internal and international migrations have often been treated within different theoretical traditions (Massey, 1998, Gardner and Osella, 2004).

The concern with categories was reflected in several of my interactions with academic and practitioner colleagues who asked me whether I was researching 'internal' or 'international migration'; 'within Nepal (internal) or outside of Nepal (international)', 'voluntary' or 'forced migration'. There were others who often presumed that I was researching labour migration from Nepal and asked me, 'is it to India, or the Gulf?' and promptly asked me questions about the volume and impact of remittances. These concerns demonstrated the popular concern on labour mobility from Nepal. The choice of these categories often reflected the commentators' own concern.

Second, the established categories and typologies of human mobility have become so authoritative that too often the use of the term migration is limited to include only a certain form of mobility based on what is considered as having 'significant' temporal, motivational and spatial dimensions. The implication of this is that a whole segment of mobility that is more common and significant is excluded from the conceptual framework of migration, both in academic and policy practice. Furthermore, some mobile populations such as refugees, pilgrims, tourists, runaways and others are largely excluded from the migration literature. The existing categories of migration treat some forms of mobility as more important and universal than others. For instance, international, long distance and permanent mobility is considered more important than internal, short distance and temporary forms of mobility (Gardner and Osella, 2004).

Third, the existing categories view human mobility primarily as an event in geographical space with very little focus on people's experiences and aspirations (Gardner and Osella, 2004). The existing categories are derived from the exclusive focus on the people who move, and often by ignoring their implications for those who stay back. Understanding and analysis of mobility has too often been derived only from the perspective of those who move without considering how this movement is experienced and understood by the people who stay back but also who are connected to and affected by the mobility. Many wish to move out but are unable to do so; many plan to move out, and their identities are bound up with this prospect; and many find their own opportunities constrained or enabled by the movement of their family member, relatives, and friends who are preparing to move, are moving, or have returned.

The critical appraisal of migration studies shows that migration is far from being a pure scientific and self explanatory concept. Instead, the categories and typologies are imposed and maintained by authoritative discourses and categorizations. Migration is thus both an analytical category and a category of practice which has important political implications. This implies that the existing classifications of migration cannot be viewed as pure scientific categories, rather it is used by the people to make sense of the world they live in and show social and political hierarchies. Therefore, the political implication of the categories needs ethnographic scrutiny. In the tendency to rely on or build on existing categories or by focussing exclusively on a particular form of mobility and not others, social scientists and policy makers tend to take certain categories for granted and naturalize them. This reinforces the existing authoritative discourses that produce these categories.

With such a situation I find that the term mobility is better suited than migration for my thesis.. This gives scope to include a whole range of short term to long term movements under the same framework. It enables one to show the commonality and differences in these, and see how these different forms of mobility are connected to each other. Furthermore this offers one opportunity to consider a wider range of mobility not just in geographical but also in socio-cultural terms. This provides a

justification for moving beyond the existing categories and typologies of migration as given but rather examining different forms of mobility as experienced by the people themselves and the meanings that people attach to these experiences, aspirations, constraints and possibilities in a particular ethnographic context. Understanding mobility from people's perspective allows one to explore a more complex picture than what is often taken for granted as the clear and defined categories of migration. Above all, treating different forms of mobility under a single framework opens one an opportunity to uncover political tendencies in the existing authoritative discourses that pathologize mobility. I shall return to this point later.

Discourse

The term 'discourse' is increasingly used in every field of life which is used to mean 'conversation', 'text' or 'speech'. However, in this thesis I use the Foucauldian concept of discourse, which means, 'a space in which certain things could be said and even imagined' (Escobar, 1995: 39). 'When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed.'(Hall, 1992: 291) In the field of development, it is a set of rules about appropriate and legitimate ways of thinking, speaking and practicing development (Grillo, 1997). The concept of discourse makes it possible to examine 'the ways in which development discourses construct the object of development' (Grillo, 1997: 19).

An excellent application of Foucauldian concept of discourse can be seen in the work of James Ferguson in Lesotho. As I shall discuss later, Ferguson demonstrates the discourses of development as structures of knowledge that shape the ways in which development projects and programmes are allowed to function.

Here, I borrow the concept of 'authoritative'(Bakhtin, 1981: 342-343) from Bakhtin to analyze the development discourses that demand that we acknowledge them and

make them our own. Another important characteristic is the distance i.e. authoritative development discourses are located in a distanced zone and are hierarchically higher. It is a word of fathers whose authority is already acknowledged in the past. 'It is not a free appropriation and assimilation of the word itself that authoritative discourse seeks to elicit from us; rather it demands our unconditional allegiance' (Bakhtin, 1981: 343).

The concept of pathology articulates the tendency found in the authoritative discourses that represent mobility as aberrant and appropriates human mobility as a dependent variable in the larger equation involving economic imbalances between different regions and class, irrespective of how people themselves evaluate and categorize it. Such discourses are well established among policy makers and there is a strong tendency to view this as the reality for millions of people in Nepal and elsewhere. In a chapter titled 'Rules for Distinguishing Between the Normal and the Pathological', Durkehim argues that given that crime seems to be omnipresent across time and space, it should be seen as functional and normal rather than something pathological (Durkheim, 1964). According to him, pathologizing crime is an important function of society because it is by punishing criminals, society reaffirms its own values. Otherwise the values of society would become blurred. This provides a useful perspective through which to analyse the problem oriented conception of mobility in authoritative discourses. 'The medical association of the term pathology is important because they throw into question relationships between the individual and the social whole as a functional and organic entity, bringing into play metaphors of national health and the conditions of body politic' (Revill and Wrigley, 2000: 3). In a forthcoming paper, Harper and Maddox use the concept of 'pathologization' in their study of health and literacy programmes and practices in Nepal (Harper and Maddox, in press). Using the Foucauldian concept of discourse, they show that the development discourses in Nepal have constructed ill-health and illiteracy as a problem to be addressed within a particular frame of reference.

Governmentality

The Foucauldian concept of governmentality offers a useful perspective to treat planned interventions like development as a configuration of ideas and imaginations that produces certain effects (Ferguson, 1994, Inda, 2005, Inda, 2006, Mosse, 2005a). Foucauldian scholars have a broader conception of government which refers to all calculated ways of thinking and acting that propose to share, regulate or manage the conditions of individuals and population towards specific goals (Foucault, 1991, Inda, 2005). This implies that govermentality designates both state and non-state elements that exercise authority over individuals and populations. The central concern of govenmentality is the security of the populations (Foucault, 1991). This concern is known as *biopower* which has taken two forms. One form is known as *biopolitics* which is concerned with population at its collective level (Inda, 2005: 5). Other form is known as the *anatomo-politics of human body* which is concerned with the individual bodies that compose the population (Inda, 2005: 5-6).

Moving away from the idea that planned interventions are purely about domination, governmentality operates by identifying pathologies (in individuals and populations) and attempting to correct them through planned interventions. Borrowing the concept from Foucault, Inda uses the concept of governmentality to provide a critique of certain mentalities and intellectual machineries that have constructed illegal immigrants in United States as an ethical pathology to be addressed in a planned way (Inda, 2006, Inda, 2002). Broadly, it is possible to understand governmentality by looking at its three dimensions—'reasons', 'technics' and 'subjects' (Inda, 2005: 7-11). 'Reasons' is primarily concerned with the epistemological character of truth making and problem making so as to allow for governance. It involves the problem oriented political rationalities of the government. 'Technics' is about different apparatus (e.g. policies and programmes) that translates such a system of thought into practice. It is concerned with programmes in the sense that such programmes are concerned with diagnosis, interventions and improvements. Through these it is possible to see 'how governmental schemes conceptualize, manage and endeavour to resolve particular problems in the light of specific goals' (Inda, 2005: 10). 'Subjects' is about concern for the population and how such concerns 'seek to cultivate a

particular type of individual and collective identity as well as forms of agency and subjectivity' (Inda, 2005: 10). The strength of the concept of governmentality consists of the fact that it views development not just as ideology but as a political project that endeavours to represent a social reality.

In recent years, the shift in the modes of government has been towards that of free-market, popularly known as neo-liberalism (Anderson, 2000, Rankin, 2004). While neo-liberalism is popular understood as withdrawal of the state, in terms of practice it is characterized by transfer of responsibilities of the government to the voluntary sector, market, communities and individual themselves (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002, Rankin, 2004). In a recent ethnography of immigration in United States, Inda discusses the mode of governmentality of the 'post-social or advanced liberal state' (Inda, 2006: 9) by which he means the neo-liberal state emerged since the 1970s. According to him, there is now a particular way of governance through responsibility that he calls 'the ethos of responsibility' (Inda, 2006: 29).

Scholars such as Ferguson and Gupta effectively use the concept of governmentality to provide a critique of development discourses in India and Lesotho (Ferguson, 1994, Ferguson and Gupta, 2002, Gupta, 2001). Ferguson uses the concept of governmentality to provide a critique of rural development discourse in Lesotho (Ferguson, 1994). He provides a discursive analysis of the World Bank's country report that constructs Lesotho as an underdeveloped, traditional, poor and agrarian society simultaneously problematizing the presence labour migration, which facilitates a particular policy response in the field of rural development. Within the development sector, drawing on ethnography from Africa and India, Ferguson and Gupta argue that neo-liberal governmentality through its verticality (the state is 'above' society) and encompassment (the state 'encompasses' its localities), and transnational governmentality and new forms of 'grassroots' politics may be challenging the long established models of spatial states (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002).

Such a framework is useful to study not just rural development discourses, which tend to represent mobility as aberrant to Nepali economy, society and culture, but

also to study specific attempts to treat them through planned interventions. Furthermore, governmentality provides a framework to illustrate how these authoritative discourses are reflected and acted upon in actual development practice. Mosse criticizes what he calls critical perspectives that treat development as politics by domination and instrumental perspectives that ignore politics in development (Mosse, 2005a: 2-6). The conceptualization of development as 'anonymous automaticity' (Mosse, 2005a: 5) of the machine that dismisses the institutional rationality of policy has been recently challenged (Mosse, 2005a, Rossi, 2004), opening a new possibility for the ethnography of development by opening the 'black box'—that is, by looking at the relationship between policy and its implementation (Mosse, 2005a). Here it is important to look at the work of a few anthropologists, in the field of development policy and their implementation, where they argue that failure of development programmes is related to failures to take account of cultural variables in policy and planning (Justice, 1989, Stone, 1989). Despite the controversy over ethical issues (Stirrat, 2005, Sridhar, 2005), the insights provided by what Mosse calls the 'concerns of the ethnography of development' (Mosse, 2005a: 6) is important because it demonstrates how policies rule not through domination but through power that seems to create a particular type of subject. Analysing the central question underlying the work: 'What if development practice is not driven by policy?' (Mosse, 2005a: 2), Mosse argues that it is through attention to the agency and the analysis of institutions that mediate in this process that works to produce success (Mosse, 2005a: 230-232). He presents five propositions about development policy and practice:

1. Policy primarily functions to mobilise and maintain political support, that is to legitimize rather than to orientate practice,
2. Development interventions are not driven by policy but by the exigencies of organizations and the need to maintain relationships,
3. Development projects work to maintain themselves as coherent policy ideas (as systems of representations) as well as operational systems,
4. Projects do not 'fail'; they are failed by wider networks of support and validation,

5. 'Success' and 'failure' are policy-oriented judgements that obscure project effects.

Mosse challenges the prevailing belief that development practice is driven by policy, rather than by the complex web of social relations, power and institutional politics. He is critical of the emphasis on creating perfect policy models (whether it is participation, sustainable rural livelihoods or good governance) because he argues that such emphasis has led to the neglect of the relationship between these frameworks and the actions, interactions, and practices that they are assumed to drive and legitimise. However, he does not dismiss the importance and relevance of policy models. Mosse writes that policy is extremely effective for development agencies because it legitimises and mobilises political and practical support. His fifth proposition provides a direct explanation to how 'success' is produced. Mosse writes that the actors work to maintain coherent representations of their actions as instances of authorised policy, because it is always in their interest to do so.

These propositions as a set provide a useful frame of reference to study the pathology of mobility as represented in development policies and its implementation in development practice.

Livelihoods

At the broader level, I locate my thesis within the framework of livelihoods perspective. For the purpose of my thesis I adopt a simple definition of livelihoods—'diverse ways in which people make a living and build their worlds' (Bebbington, 1999: 2034). Rather than making a presumption that people prefer not to move, the concept of livelihoods provides a framework to explore the meanings people attach to different forms of mobility and considers the contexts where people seek and expect to find opportunities for mobility (De Haan, 1999, Whitehead, 2002). It offers a useful framework through which to view the social meanings of mobility as constructed by the people themselves and how this is structured by—and in turn structures—societal relations and norms. Working with the concept of

livelihoods allows one to explore the meaning of mobility beyond the dominant narrow economistic approach. One can thus approach it from a socio-cultural as well as an economic perspective.

At a broader level, economic approaches have looked at mobility in a positive manner and have emphasized the rational choice of an individual migrant (Lee, 1966, Todaro, 1976) or (later) migrant household (Stark, 1991), whereas structuralist theorists and neo-Marxists have looked at human mobility in a pessimistic manner, as resulting from an exploitative structure, underdevelopment, poverty, population pressure and environmental degradation (Breman, 1985, Shrestha, 1990). It is argued that both individualistic (and behavioural) models and migration analyses in the Marxist (or structuralist) tradition, have taken a one-sided point of view (de Haan 1999, Kothari 2002). Economic models tend to isolate economic decision making, and they do not analyse the cultural, political and social contexts in which these decisions are made. On the other hand, Marxist analyses over-emphasize the political-economic contexts that influence mobility decisions. Economic compulsions seem quite essential in determining the choices of people, but choices are more complex. Social, ethnic and religious factors likewise constrain people's mobility (De Haan and Rogaly, 2002, Shah, 2006). In addition, the perspective and choice of mobile people is very important to understand why some people move and others do not. It is in this context that the livelihoods approach provides an opportunity to explore the meanings and experiences of mobility in relation to the gendered, familial, social and economic dynamics of those who move and their networks, from their own perspective. The major feature of livelihoods approach is that it does not view migrants as vulnerable and helpless victims, but as dynamic actors, who use tactics and cope with risks imposed through external conditions (Whitehead, 2002). It emphasizes an institutional approach to look at mobility, focussing on the premise that people are actors who seek to counter vulnerability arising out of high risk and uncertainty by deploying various strategies, using both tangible and intangible resources, for protecting their immediate survival as well as their long term well-being (Bebbington, 1999). The major issues are resources that are available and accessible to people, and the institutional processes that mediate

people's ability to manage livelihoods. The decision to move is thus based on household's experience and interpretation of these contexts and a valuation of the different possibilities and constraints (De Haan, 1997).

Livelihoods approach departs from economic theory, arguing that such a theory fails to recognize livelihood strategies as social and cultural processes and their role in reproducing the social structure. The argument is that economic theory focuses narrowly on economic capital and by doing so the whole universe of exchanges is reduced to mercantile exchange aimed at the self-interested maximization of profit, whereas all other forms of exchange are conceived as non-economic and therefore disinterested. In response, in addition to economic capital, livelihoods approach identifies cultural and social capital as well. Following actor-centred notions, this approach argues that 'we need a notion of resources that not only helps us to understand the way in which people deal with their poverty and well-being in a material sense but also the ways in which their perception of poverty and well-being are related to their livelihood choices and strategies' (Bebbington, 1999: 2022) and the capacities that they possess both to add to their quality of life and also enhance their capabilities to confront the social conditions that perpetuate risks and vulnerability.

Masculinity

The concept of masculinity offers a useful way to illustrate the socio-cultural dimension of mobility within the emerging scholarship on livelihoods perspective. This possibility has been largely neglected where a focus on 'gender' has traditionally been on women (Bretell, 2000, Jackson, 2001). 'Originally concentrated upon women of the industrialized West, it gradually expanded to recognize and include the contributions of women of the global South' (Jones, 2006: xii). Despite the shift from the women in development (WID) to the gender and development (GAD) paradigm in the 1990s where the latter theoretically provides a greater space for inclusion of man and masculinities, social analysis have largely preferred to treat men as ungendered beings (Jones, 2006).

The work of Connell is influential in debates and discussion on masculinities after the publication of 'Gender and Power' (Connell, 1987) and 'Masculinities' (Connell, 1995). In the first book Connell demonstrates how gender was a concept of power (Connell, 1987) and shows how men gained from the overall subordination of women. He argues that being a man gives power. His second book develops the theory on masculinities which shows that not all men share the power and not all are exploitative (Connell, 1995). He argues that there is no such thing as a universal masculinity, but rather different masculinities are organised hierarchically. The key here is what he calls 'hegemonic' masculinity which dominates other masculinities (namely subordinate, complicit and marginalized) and creates a model for what it means to be a real man. 'Hegemonic masculinities define successful ways of "being a man"; in so doing, they define other masculine styles as inadequate or inferior' (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994: 3). The work on multiple masculinities has contributed to challenging the naturalized assumptions of what it means to 'be a man'. In recent years, there is an emerging body of literature on gender with the theme of masculinity. In his book titled 'The End of Masculinity', MacInnes argues that such growing concern might be misplaced and to spend time to study new and more acceptable models of masculinity is not worthwhile (MacInnes, 1998). Drawing on European social history, he regards the problem as being rooted in the uncompleted project of modernity and the idea of the social contract upon which modernity exists. His argument is that gender differences is a social construct and there is no logical base from which to associate masculinity with biological males.

Until recently, the study of masculinity in the South Asian context has been somewhat neglected (Chopra et al., 2004, Osella and Osella, 2006, Srivastava, 2004). Exploring the ethnographies of South Asia with the intention of locating men, Osella and Osella write that while men are certainly present they are not the explicit object of study and find that not much attention is paid to understanding their behaviour and their relationship with others (Osella and Osella, 2006: 4). For a long time, South Asian men have been treated as universally given, ungendered objects and have rarely been examined as gendered beings. The question of how boys become

complete men and what role work and mobility plays in the construction of manhood, remains an important question.

There is a small body of emerging work that looks at masculinity and mobility in South Asia (Charsley, 2005, Chopra, 2006, Osella and Osella, 2006) and beyond (Hoven and Meijering, 2005, Margold, 1995, Walter et al., 2004) that addresses the impact of mobility on men's identity in different ways. Osella and Osella show how the migration of young men from Kerala to the Gulf has become incorporated into the local styles of masculinity (Osella and Osella, 2000). On the one hand this presents them with opportunities to win status as wise and secure men while threatens male identity if resources are not managed well. Comparing the case of marriage-led movement of Pakistani men to Britain, to that of 'house son-in-law' (*ghar damad*), Charsley shows that such a movement has an adverse impact on their male identity (Charsley, 2005: 91). She demonstrates that 'house son-in-laws' are faced with a somewhat unusual proximity of the wife's family in a new place. In addition, these men lack a local kin support to assert their male identity. Combined together, such a context can result in a restructuring of gender identity. Margold links masculinity with global business while discussing the narratives of Filipino men who are deployed in the Middle East (Margold, 1995). These men have to compete with the challenges and uncertainties of transnational industries in the Middle East that threaten their indigenous sense of masculinity.

All these work indicate that the ideas of masculinity appear to be a significant issue from the people's perspective. Therefore, it is possible to approach masculinity as an ideological space through which men see their life. The example of the large number of Nepali men who travel to work in Indian cities like Mumbai offers an interesting opportunity to bring human mobility and masculinity together in order to explain the context, reasons and effect of men's movement to work from their perspective.

Research methods

Given the complex nature of the study that draws data from different sources at different levels, I discuss the detailed methodological issues within the respective chapters. However, I find it useful to provide a brief description of my fieldwork experience that played a crucial role in the research process and its results. The emerging nature of my work and the changing political and security situation in Nepal played an important role in the making of this thesis in terms of site, strategies and results. An important aspect of my fieldwork was to respond to the problems encountered and challenges faced and turn these into opportunities for me as a researcher. In the meantime, recognizing the difficult political and security situation in Nepal and its potential impact on fieldwork, I had prepared an alternative research design, which was to study the development discourses on migration and mobility.

My access to do fieldwork in the village was negotiated by my relationship with the village health worker (a distant relative of mine, whom I called *uncle*) who was working as a health worker in the village for more than five years. His contact with the Maoists and the people in the village made it easier for me to enter the village. However, my earlier plan to get engaged into extensive ethnographic fieldwork in Palpa by staying in the village for a longer period faced a major constraint. I was advised not to stay overnight in the village and eventually after three months I discontinued my fieldwork there.[3] Later I continued fieldwork to trace the people who moved out of the village to three different destinations—Kathmandu, the *terāi* (in Rupandehi district) and Mumbai (in India). As I shall discuss in Chapter VI, even after withdrawing from the village, I managed to travel to Mumbai with a group of three men from the village. In the meantime, I pursued the alternative design by collecting data from selected development agencies with the purpose of seeking a treatment of mobility in their policies, programmes and implementation.

To explore the meanings and significance of mobility as evaluated and categorized by the people themselves and their implications for understanding the paradox and

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[3] I have discussed the implication (methodological, ethical and practical) of conducting fieldwork in the context of socio-political conflict in Chapter II.

politics in international development, I carried out multi-sited and multilevel ethnographic fieldwork in Nepal and India. Ethnographic fieldwork proved to be a very suitable method of studying the meanings beyond the authoritative categories. My fieldwork involved a year long period (*from* June 2004 *to* June 2005) of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in Palpa district including tracing the experience of several individuals and households who moved out of the area both within and outside of Nepal, particularly young men who travelled to find work opportunities in the Indian city of Mumbai. Further, I collected data from selected development agencies with the intention of seeking a treatment of mobility in their policies, programmes and implementation. As a multilayered study, the data were collected from the level of global development discourses, through country specific policies and community level experiences of implementation of the programmes. The method was ethnographic in the sense that the focus was on generating both the grounded meanings of forms of mobility as experienced and categorized by the people themselves. Further, ethnography was selected to produce a description of how development discourses systematically conceptualize mobility in their policies and programmes. All this meant that I drew on a range of different research methods—in-depth interviews, informal interactions, participant observation and household surveys—to address my research questions.

By using qualitative methods—in-depth interviews, informal interactions and participant observation—I studied the local meanings of different forms of mobility and their socio-cultural significance in people's lives. These included interactions with several households about their experience or stories related to mobility. In Yamgha village in Palpa, I carried out a household survey of 140 households (70 Magar and 70 Bahun) for the purpose of gathering primary data on socio-economic status and aspects of migration and mobility in these households.[4] I was assisted by two young men from the village (a Magar and a Bahun) who accompanied and introduced me to the households when necessary. I combined the household survey along with my ethnographic fieldwork in the village and it took about one month to complete the household survey. I consulted the two men who assisted me to select

[4] I have attached the form used for the household survey (both in Nepali and English) in Annex III.

the sample household from different clusters in the village. The interviews for the survey were carried out in the respective households and it took about 30-40 minutes to complete an interview.[5]

The experience of travel to Mumbai with a group of three men and a short period of fieldwork of seven weeks in Mumbai provided me with in-depth insights into the meanings and experiences of this movement for the men who moved and for those who stayed back. Apart from informal interactions with many Nepali migrants, I carried out interviews with 18 Nepali migrant men in Mumbai in their residence. In addition, I carried out interviews with five employers in Mumbai. It also involved collecting information about Sathi Nepal, an HIV/AIDS project working with Nepali male migrants in Mumbai. To better understand the social life of the project, I visited the project, participated in their day to day activities and interacted with different staff.

At another level, I collected data on rural development and HIV/AIDS to understand the representations of migration and migrants in development discourses. I obtained the policies and programme documents of these agencies by direct request from these agencies and/or by using libraries or their web pages. In addition, I carried out a number of both formal (11) and informal (20) interviews with advisors, programme managers and consultants working in different agencies implementing these policies at different levels to understand the discourses beyond the face value of the policy documents.[6] Most of these interviews were carried out in the office of the development agencies except four which were carried out in a café.

As I shall discuss in Chapter V, by putting together my fieldnotes from the village I discovered a diverse set of ways to talk about different forms of mobility. In attempting to explore the meanings of different forms of mobility for the life and livelihoods of the people, I realized that the official categories and typologies did not

[5] I discuss the difficulties in carrying out survey at the time of socio-political conflict in Chapter II.
[6] I have attached the guideline used for the interview in Annex II.

match those generated by the people themselves. A more fruitful approach was to start with the meanings that people themselves attach to mobility of various kinds.

The setting: Palpa

This thesis is based on ethnographic research in a village in Palpa, a western hill district in Nepal, and from following several individuals and households from there to different locales, both within Nepal and in India. In this section, I sketch the local context for my thesis, to help the reader contextualize the discussion in the forthcoming chapters. While there is a lack of knowledge in the field of social history of Palpa, reflecting the overall picture of social history in Nepal (Onta, 1994), in recent years several researchers have generated knowledge on different aspects of social life in and around Palpa (Ahearn, 2004, Adhikari, 1993, Harper, 2003, Hitchcock, 1966, Miller, 2000, Pageni, 1991, Ramirez, 2000, Smadja, 1999, Stone, 1989, Wilmore, 2002).

Why Palpa?

Palpa was an ideal locale to conduct fieldwork for both practical and theoretical reasons. Most importantly, it was relatively less affected by the ongoing socio-political conflict when compared to other hill regions in Nepal. Further, it was my home area and thus I had access to social networks and safety and security related information.[7] Unlike the classic ethnographic model, where scholars explore in foreign countries or distant communities, I went from Edinburgh to conduct fieldwork at home. Palpa had an emotional significance to me as it was where I was born and brought up. It was the area where I still had friends and relatives. I did my entire schooling in Tansen town, eventually moving to Kathmandu for further studies. I was not an outsider like traditional ethnographers who make constant attempts to transform themselves into insiders during their fieldwork period. In many ways I was an insider who was making constant attempts to transform himself into an outsider during the process of fieldwork, reflection and writing this thesis.

[7] I discuss my experience of conducting fieldwork in conflict situation in Chapter II.

Moreover, there were sufficient theoretical grounds for choosing Palpa as a locale for my research as it was a typical hill area in western central Nepal with evidence of mobility. As I shall show in Chapter IV, the region had become a privileged site of development policies and political life in the last 40 years. Yet it appeared to me that the households with whom development institutions have aimed to work were on the move. Furthermore, some studies on the hills of Nepal showed the significance of mobility in understanding social change and people's livelihoods (Adhikari, 2001, Blaikie et al., 2002, Blaikie et al., 1980, Blaikie et al., 1979, Macfarlane, 2001, Macfarlane, 1976, Seddon et al., 2002, Seddon et al., 2001). Yamgha village in Palpa provided a useful context for studying the meanings of mobility among Bahuns and Magars. My interest in comparison between 'high caste' Bahuns and 'ethnic group' Magars was informed by the view that knowledge in social science is built on implicit or explicit comparison (Bechhofer and Paterson, 2000), by the debate on caste and ethnicity in Nepal (Bista, 1991, Gellner et al., 1997) and by the livelihoods perspective where institutional variables are considered key to explain people's livelihoods (Bebbington, 1999, Whitehead, 2002).

Geography

Palpa was situated in the western central region of Nepal. The entire fieldwork area was hilly and difficult with many valleys and lower lying land at the banks of small streams, including Melandi stream and the holy Kali-gandaki River. The river ran along the boundary of Palpa district separating it from the neighbouring Syangja district. The area on the whole lied within the Mahabharata environmental domain (200 metres to 2000 metres) and covered an ecological diversity with implications for people's livelihoods (Smadja, 2000). For instance, the Tihau watershed provided either irrigation or floods in the monsoon that affected people's livelihoods directly (Wilmore, 2002). I enjoyed the panoramic view of the Himalayas towards the north and Madi Phat[8] and the hills reaching far to the edge of the *terāi* towards the south (see plate 1.2). The village of Yamgha, where I carried out most of my fieldwork,

[8] A valley named Madi, which is about 5-6 hours walk from the village. The land in Madi Phat is considered very fertile.

had a total area of 142 hectares, comprising agricultural land (89 hectare), forests (27 hectare), settlements/houses, streams and village roads and trails (DDC, 2000). The red and whitewashed houses roofed with galvanized iron sheets and thatch may be observed scattered among the hillsides. The galvanized iron sheets that had grown in recent years indicated relative prosperity in comparison to thatch roof. Almost 85 per cent of the households in Yamgha had galvanized iron sheets. Before the malaria eradication programme, which was launched in 1952, *beshi*[9] were used only for cultivation and people returned to their *gāũ*[10] at night. Since then, there had been a growth of settlement on the valley floors.

People

It is worth mentioning two major aspects of the population of Palpa. *First*, its population was characterized by a lower growth rate than the national average. The population of Palpa was 214,442 in 1981. It increased to 236,313 in 1991 and to 268,558 in 2001. The overall population growth rate of Palpa was 1.79 per cent (CBS, 2002), compared with the national average of 2.5 per cent. It is possible that this lower growth rate was mainly due to a lower fertility rate as a result of family planning programmes, and increased out-migration from Palpa. *Second*, there was the political and cultural dominance of Parbatiyas (Indo-Nepali), whose culture has always dominated the Nepali state, despite the fact that Magars constituted almost 50 per cent of the population of Palpa. Here, the dominance of Parbatiyas was stronger than elsewhere as Magars had lost their language, Magarkura (Jest et al., 2000). Only a few Magars in the eastern part of Palpa spoke their own language, where they had an overwhelming majority when compared to Parbatiyas. Throughout Palpa, both the Parbatiyas and Magars lived together in the same areas as a result of the immigration of Bahuns, along with other Indo-European linguistic groups, into the region where Magars had arrived a few centuries earlier (Adhikari, 1993, Whelpton, 2005). Apart from Bahun (60%) and Magar (17%), the other major population groups in Yamgha VDC were—Kami, Bote, Sarki, Chetri, and Thakuri. Other population groups

[9] The lower part of the hill sides and valley floors, which is considered fertile and malarial.
[10] Village; village houses that are located in the higher altitude of the hill.

included Newar, Damai, Kumal and Gurung among others. These different social groups mainly practised the Hindu religion in varying ways and degrees.

Politics and administration

In the history of Nepal, Palpa was an important state of the Sen Kings, who ruled it for about 498 years (1305-1804 AD). Its significance declined following the unification of Nepal[11] and several administrative reforms that took place during the Panchayat era[12] (Whelpton, 2005). At the time of King Mani Mukunda Sen and Lohang Sen, it was extended to the Koshi River in the east. In the process of the unification, Palpa was integrated into greater Nepal (Pageni, 1992). Until 1934, the boundary of Palpa extended as far as Gorkha in the east, Rupandehi, Nawalparasi, Kapilbastu and Chitwan in the south, Jajarkot in the west and Mustang in the north. Following the establishment of democracy in 1952, the size of Palpa was reduced in the east, west and south. In 1975, the district assumed its present shape and size after the separation of 11 village *pañchāyats*[13], densely populated by Magars from Palpa by integrating them with the neighbouring Nawalparasi district. This was a political manipulation by the upper caste Bahuns, Chetris and Newars in Palpa in order to defeat Magar candidates in the National Assembly. The ethnic politics has had an important role in political-economic and cultural subordination of Magars in recent years. Additionally, Magars felt excluded from the benefits of development, not just because they lacked important links to the external world of power and resources, but also because they were intimidated by outside officials (Adhikari, 1993, Stone, 1989).

Palpa was one of the 75 districts in Nepal. Tansen, the administrative and commercial centre of Palpa, was a hill town. Tansen is comparable to other hill towns like Chainpur (Sharma, 1994), Bandipur (Mikesell, 1999) and Belaspur bazaar

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[11] It started with King Prithvi Narayan Shah (AD 1723 to 1775) and followed by his successors that resulted in what was to become 'greater Nepal'.
[12] It is a system of 'non-party democracy' instituted by King Mahendra that gave absolute power to monarchy. This political system was in Nepal during 1961-1990, which was eventually thrown down by the popular people's movement in 1990.
[13] Village level administrative divisions that are today called Village Development Committee (VDC).

(Caplan, 1975), which are characterized by migration of the Newar mercantile class from Kathmandu as a result of the military and administrative needs of the Gorkhali Empire. Palpa was administratively divided into 66 Village Development Committees (VDCs). The people of Palpa were known for their interests in various political mobilizations linked to national politics (Pageni, 1991). The Nepali Congress party was victorious in all three constituencies in the first parliamentary election in 1991, whereas it was the United Marxist-Leninists that won all three seats in the following election in 1994. While the Maoists' actual popularity was not known, they had mobilized themselves as an important force in paralyzing the local activities of other political parties.

At the time of the fieldwork the VDC office in Yamgha had been locked by the Maoists for the previous two years. The newly built, whitewashed VDC building was painted by the Maoists with their slogans and demands (see plate 2.1).[14] The local politicians were seen as little interested in local level politics. The VDC secretary, an official appointed by the DDC office, was not stationed in the village but I met him several times in Tansen. There was a Sub-health Post in Yamgha staffed by the official in charge, the Village Health Worker, the Maternal and Child Health Worker and a peon. There were schools throughout the villages, which had emerged as important agents of change. There were five schools in Yamgha including one secondary school, one lower secondary school and three primary schools. There was no presence of police or state security forces, except when they came for *gasti*[15].

Economy

Economically, Palpa did not differ much from other hilly regions in western Nepal. While the major economic activity was subsistence farming, almost all households were engaged in diverse economic activities. The people of Yamgha, as in other parts of Palpa, were subsistence farmers in the sense that they produced mostly for

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[14] A few of the slogans that I read were: *Ne Ka Pa Māobadi Zindābād* (Long live Nepal Communist Party-Maoist) *Asar 28 ko Nepal Band Safal Pārau* (Lets make the Nepal closure of 28 of Asād a success). *Gyane Chor, desh chod* (Gyane, the thief, leave Nepal).

[15] Search operation; patrol done by security forces.

consumption and not for trade (Miller, 2000, Raithelhuber, 2003). The agriculture was characterized by rice cultivation in *khet*[16], cultivation of maize, millet, beans and vegetables in *bāri*[17], preservation and use of fodder on dry and *pākho*[18], and animal husbandry. Employment outside the village, both long and short distance, was an important source of livelihoods for most of the households. In Yamgha, 56 per cent of the households received remittances from their family members working in different locations within and outside Nepal. Nonetheless, people identified farming as their primary occupation. It was not important for the households to depend on agriculture to identify themselves as farmers. Farming provided a means of livelihoods for the village households, who continued to engage in farming, though it played a less significant role in their day to day living. The household survey in Yamgha showed that 61 per cent perceived a declining productivity and it was becoming increasingly difficult for them to gain much from agriculture. However, the very identification of themselves as people from the village meant that they identified themselves as farmers.

A longitudinal study of social change in western central Nepal that included Palpa concluded by stating 'the most important empirical conclusion about social change in rural western Nepal over 20 years is the degree of its continuity' (Blaikie et al., 2002: 1267). This study made a comparison of class structure over 20 years which showed that there has been very little change in the rural class structure. The household survey that I carried out in Yamgha showed that land distribution was unequal. The distribution of *khet* among the household in Yamgha showed that 44 per cent did not have access to it, about 26 per cent owned 1-4 *ropani*[19] land, about 18 per cent owned 5-8 *ropani* and 12 per cent owned 9-25 *ropani* land. Likewise, the distribution of *bāri/pākho* among the households in Yamgha showed that 2 per cent did not own it, about 76 per cent owned 1-10 *ropani* land, about 14 per cent owned 11-20 *ropani* and 7 per cent owned 21-50 *ropani*. While only one household was identified as landless, most of the households owned too little land to sustain a surplus. Here it is

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[16] Irrigated field; it is used for paddy cultivation.
[17] Dry field; it is used for growing maize, millet among others.
[18] Rocky land; it is not suitable for farming. It is used for growing fodder and used as a grazing land.
[19] Unit for land measurement: 1 *ropani* is 70 ft by 70 ft, approx 455 square metres.

important to note that the 19th century rulers adopted policies to mobilize land and labour for their territorial expansion. Under the policies of land ownership the taxation system and unpaid labour, the peasants were forced to share a large proportion of their production with the elite who had no role in production (Regmi, 1978). While analysing the household socio-economic status in the management of income and expenditure, my survey showed that 55 per cent households felt that they had more or less enough for them to manage their household expenses together with whatever they were able to earn from different economic activities. About 21 per cent had been able to make some saving, so as to invest in the education of their children, building houses or buying land, whereas about 24 per cent had found it difficult to cope with daily survival and were dependent on loans.

Development activities

Palpa district appeared relatively better on development indicators when compared to other neighbouring districts. In 2001, life expectancy at birth was 59.6 (56.9 for male and 60.5 for female) for Palpa and 59.5 (59.8 for male and 59.3 for female) for Nepal; adult literacy rate was 60.7 (74.1 for male and 50.4 for female) for Palpa and 50.70 (65.8 for female and 35.4 for female) for Nepal; infant mortality rate was 75 for Palpa and 64 for Nepal; Human Development Index was 0.486 for Palpa 0.466 for Nepal; Human Poverty Index was 33 for Palpa and 39.2 for Nepal; Gender Empowerment Measure was 0.428 for Palpa and 0.385 for Nepal and per capita income was 214 US $ for Palpa and 210 US $ for Nepal (UNDP, 2001, CBS, 2002). However, despite these impressive statistics significant differences existed in the quality of life across caste, class and gender reflecting the overall situation of Nepal.

Modern development in Palpa was not new. In 1954 United Mission to Nepal (UMN) established a missionary hospital on the outskirts of Tansen. The 132-bed hospital continued to provide a health facility to people from Palpa and beyond.[20] Apart from the Mission hospital, UMN started a rural community development

[20] More information on mission hospital and health related issues see: HARPER, I. (2003) Mission, Magic and Medicalisation: An Anthropological Study into Public Health in Contemporary Nepal. *Anthropology.* London, University of London.

programme in Palpa in 1958 through to 1997, which was locally known as CHDP (Community Health and Development Programme). The strategy of the programme was to reach beyond the hospital setting to the surrounding communities through various community health and development programmes, which included providing primary health care in local health facilities, promoting health practices, raising awareness and initiating community-based development activities.

Swiss development agency Helvetas-Nepal was working in Palpa since 1955, particularly within the field of watershed development around Madi Phat. Helvetas-Nepal continued to work in Palpa though its strategies and projects underwent significant changes over time. Tinau Watershed Project (TWP) was implemented in Palpa for about ten years (1979-1988) and was followed by PDP (Palpa Development Programme) for about 6 years (1989-1995). Since 1996, Local Initiative Support Programme (LISP), which aimed to 'enable the people of Palpa district to become more self-reliant and achieve an improved level of social and economic being', had been in operation in Palpa. It implemented several programmes in partnership with local government, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) and CBOs (Community Based Organisations) in the field of coffee farming, ginger promotion, vegetable/micro-irrigation, goat raising, non-timber forest promotion, social advocacy and small income generation, local broadcasting, tourism development, skill development, saving and credit, milk cooperatives, road construction, social mobilisation, participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation, and service delivery.

Several other development programmes and projects were carried out in different villages in Palpa. In the post 1990 era, Palpa had seen a growth of development activities, both in the initiatives of the state and non-state agencies. An inventory released by the DDC in 2001 showed that there were 15 International NGOs and 426 NGOs working in Palpa district alone (DDC, 2000). It was common to find village committees formed by different development agencies that had taken responsibility at the local level for the management of various development activities like road construction, drinking water, school, forest management among others.

Road

Before the construction of the road, people used the trade routes to go down to the plains or other places (Smadja, 1999). Since the building of the 176 kilometres long Siddhartha highway in 1969[21], Palpa had been well connected to the *terāi*, Kathmandu and beyond. Supported by Indian aid, the highway divided Palpa into two parts. The construction of the road was a major factor connecting Palpa to the outside world and transforming it (Smadja, 1999). It was possible to take a bus from Palpa and reach Kathmandu within 10-12 hours. There were frequent buses to different destinations within Nepal, and the Indian border of Sunauli was just 68 kilometres from Tansen.

Prior to the construction of the roads, Tansen was historically a well known commercial town in the western Nepal. The construction of the Siddhartha highway and smaller roads connecting Tansen to villages and inner districts (Gulmi, Arghakhachi, Baglung and Parbat) resulted in Tansen's loss of significance as a commercial centre (Smadja, 2000). The construction of roads suitable for traffic was largely a result of decentralized governance in the aftermath of the restoration of multiparty democracy. The roads were built with local people's participation and the funds released by the government through District Development Committee. Furthermore, most of the funds released to each VDC by the United Marxist Leninist (UML) and Nepali Congress (NC) government under popular schemes (e.g. CPN/UML initiated *āphnu gāũ āphui banāu*[22]) were invested in the building of the roads.

There was a motorable road that went through Tansen to Gulmi district. The road was built towards the west of the district extending up to the border of Arghakhachi district (Harthok-Chahara part is 26 kilometres). Likewise, from the intersection in

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[21] The construction of the highway began in the year 1965.

[22] It literally means 'let's build our village ourselves'. This programme was introduced after CPN/UML formed a minority government in December 2004. The communist government headed by Man Mohan Adhikari lasted for nine months.

Aryabhanjyang, the road went towards the east reaching to Rampur and beyond (Aryabhanjyang-Rampur part is 50 kilometres). Small roads had reached 65 out of 66 VDCs of Palpa. It was possible to get jeeps from Tansen to go to different villages including Yamgha. For last two years, a jeep service was available from Tansen to Yamgha, at NRs 35 for one way journey.

Market and consumption

The construction of roads and other development activities impacted upon people's lives in different ways. One visible change was the growth of settlements close to the newly built roadsides, forming small bazaars like Aryabhangyang, Bartung, Dumre and Humin among others (Smadja, 1999). These new settlements provided opportunities to start small shops, hotels and bars. There was a growth in the construction of new houses built with modern building materials like cement, iron and gravel.

Small shops were seen in the villages which sold goods coming from other parts of Nepal, particularly the *terāi* and India. People ate rice bought from a local shop in the village or from Tansen, imported from the *terāi*. Snacks made of millet and maize was no longer preferred by the younger generation, but noodles, bread and biscuits were consumed. People used soap, shampoo, batteries, and many other goods. The shops in the villages supplied LPG cooking gas. In Yamgha there were 10 households that used LPG gas. People were seen bringing vegetables such as tomatoes and cauliflowers from the market in Tansen to the village. Two village shops sold vegetables brought from Tansen, which originally came from the *terāi*. The need for cash meant that the households sold milk and dairy products, chickens and goats in the market instead of consuming them.

With the interventions of the agricultural programmes, introduced by the state in partnership with aid agencies and NGOs, and the building of roads, there was a significant transformation in agricultural practices (Smadja, 1999). Traditional farming techniques were largely replaced with modern practices mostly through the

works of Junior Technical Advisors (JTAs), who gave advice on modern farming and animal husbandry (Stone, 1989). There were many shops in Tansen and small towns like Aryabhangyang, Bastari, Harthok and Rampur that sold modern fertilizers, pesticides and hybrid seeds. People in the villages listened to programmes about agriculture broadcast on the radio that often encouraged people to adopt new farming techniques. It was common to see new farming techniques pushed through by the District Agriculture Office and the programmes of NGOs like Helvetas-Nepal. With the encouragement to use modern fertilizers and pesticides, many people in the village adopted to these practices, though people maintained a contradictory perception of modern farming practices showing a parallel with Gupta's observation in a north Indian village of Alipur[23] in 1990s (Gupta, 1999:2-5). Like the farmers of Alipur, the farmers in Palpa were already caught up in the discourse on modern development.

While people continued to grow grains, there was a significant change towards cash crops like ginger, coffee and vegetables. Given the demand for fresh vegetables in Tansen, a few farming households had begun to experiment with vegetables (cauliflower, tomato, modern hybrid beans, modern cucumber etc) in their fields. People living at higher altitudes of the village grew a particular type of beans (known as *gahate dāl*), which were used for household consumption while the surplus was sold in a local market in Tansen. People previously sold milk and other dairy products through Tansen on their own initiative. This practice had been transformed with the introduction of dairy cooperatives in the villages since 1990.

An important aspect of consumption included communications and media. Whether cooking at home or ploughing the field, listening to the radio was very common among the people in the village. In Palpa alone there were three FM stations, and in addition to these, people listened to FM transmissions from neighbouring districts. People mostly tuned into local FM radio, and only a few people in the village tuned to Radio Nepal. Likewise, electrification facilitated the growth of television ownership. While most the people continued to watch Doordarshan (Indian National

[23] It is a pseudo name given by Gupta.

Television), the erection of a television tower on the top of Srinagar hill in 1997 meant that more people watched Nepal Television (the national television of Nepal) than previously. There was a growing interest in commercial satellite television programmes, which was reflected in the growing subscription to cable television in Tansen and the erection of disc antennas in small bazaars. In Tansen, Ratna Cable Television produced programmes locally and broadcast them for residents in Tansen (Wilmore, 2002).

Similarly, the use of the telephone was very common. There used to be three telephone lines in Yamgha but none of them were working during my visit. They were disconnected by the government as it suspected that they were being used by the Maoists. Many people from the village went to Tansen to make phone calls.

In this section I provided a brief discussion on various aspects of social life in Palpa.

Chapter outline

The content and organisation of this thesis reflects the five concepts discussed earlier. It is divided into eight chapters.

Chapter II contains a systematic description of the field experience that is crucial to the research process and its results. It describes the experience of conducting fieldwork in the context of socio-political conflict, presents a detailed description of methodological, ethical and practical issues as experienced in the field, and places them in the context of scholarship in this area. It argues that the fieldwork in the context of socio-political conflict poses different physical, psychological, ethical and methodological challenges for a native researcher. The chapter describes the experience of negotiating the complicated field, relationships and research strategies.

Chapter III is a critical review of existing literature on the hill population of Nepal with the purpose of searching for an understanding of mobility. In this chaper I show the role played by scholars/social scientists in the construction of the rural population

and their livelihoods in relation to human mobility through various historical and ethnographic research studies. I argue that influential studies, dealing with the population in the hills of Nepal, have failed to consider the centrality of human mobility that has important socio-cultural, politico-economic implications.

Chapter IV discusses the rural development discourses that attempt to pathologize human mobility by promoting a particular understanding of Nepali society as agrarian and dependent on natural resources and at the same time representing mobility as an aberrant feature of Nepali society. This chapter examines how mobility was constructed as a problem in policy debates and how policy responses were engendered by these constructions. It argues that the rural development policies in Nepal that conceptualized people's livelihoods only in terms of agriculture and natural resources failed to comprehend the complex and multifaceted nature of people's livelihoods in rural Nepal.

Chapter V discusses the grounded understanding of different forms of mobility as evaluated and categorized by the people themselves. It shows a multifaceted picture of mobility and demonstrates that it is impossible to understand Nepali society without taking account of the perspective of movement. Unlike the official categories, the classification and evaluation of forms of mobility developed by the people was untidy with overlapping between different forms of mobility and one form of mobility often leading to the other.

Chapter VI exemplifies a particular form of mobility—men's mobility to work in the Indian city of Mumbai—that argues for a socio-cultural understanding of mobility beyond a narrow economic approach. This is demonstrated by discussing this form of mobility in relation to masculinity. I show that under the difficult and exploitative conditions of work in India, masculinity was both reconstituted and compromised by men's movement to India. Despite all these constraints it was possible to see these men exercising their agency and reconstructing their masculine identity through their consumption of experience, goods and images that were found in Mumbai.

Chapter VII discusses the discourses on HIV/AIDS in relation to men's movement to work in Indian cities like Mumbai. It discusses how pathologizing policy discourses are reflected and acted upon in actual development practice in the field of HIV/AIDS and mobility. The chapter discusses the complex relationship that exists between the policy ideas of pathologies of mobility and their implementation.

Chapter VIII brings together evidence and arguments from the various chapters. It concludes by contributing to scholarship on the disjuncture in international development between the authoritative discourses and the ethnography reality and by presenting a fresh perspective on human mobility in relation to people's livelihoods.

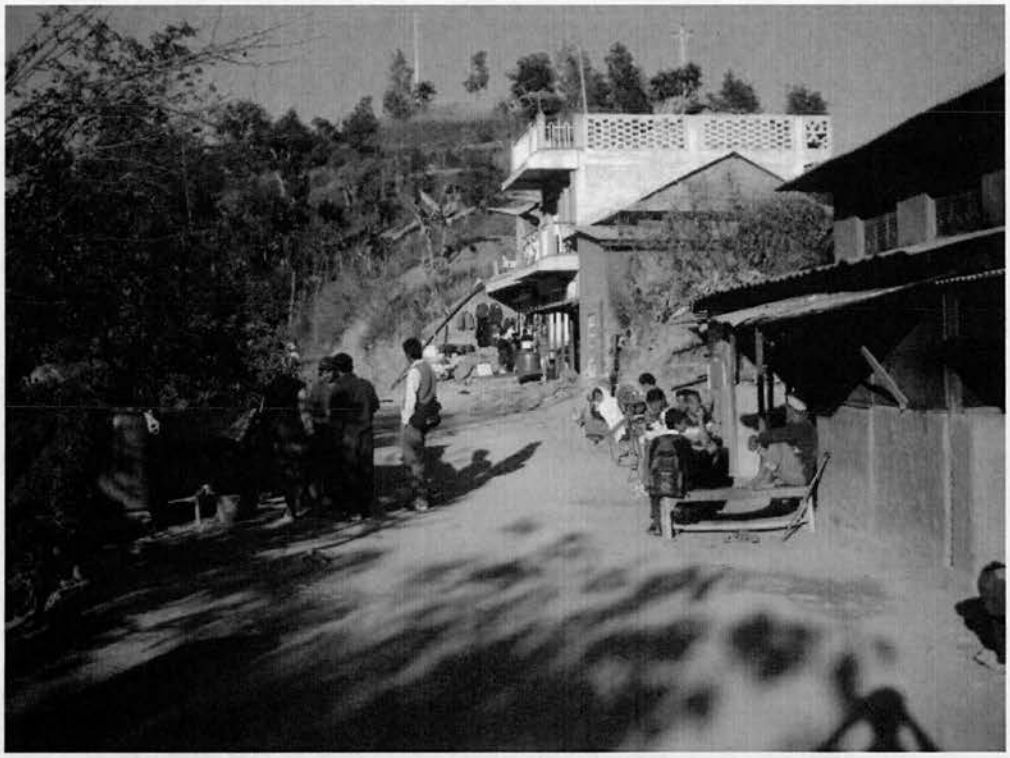

Plate 1.1 The newly built motorable road leading to Yamgha, Chappani, Palpa

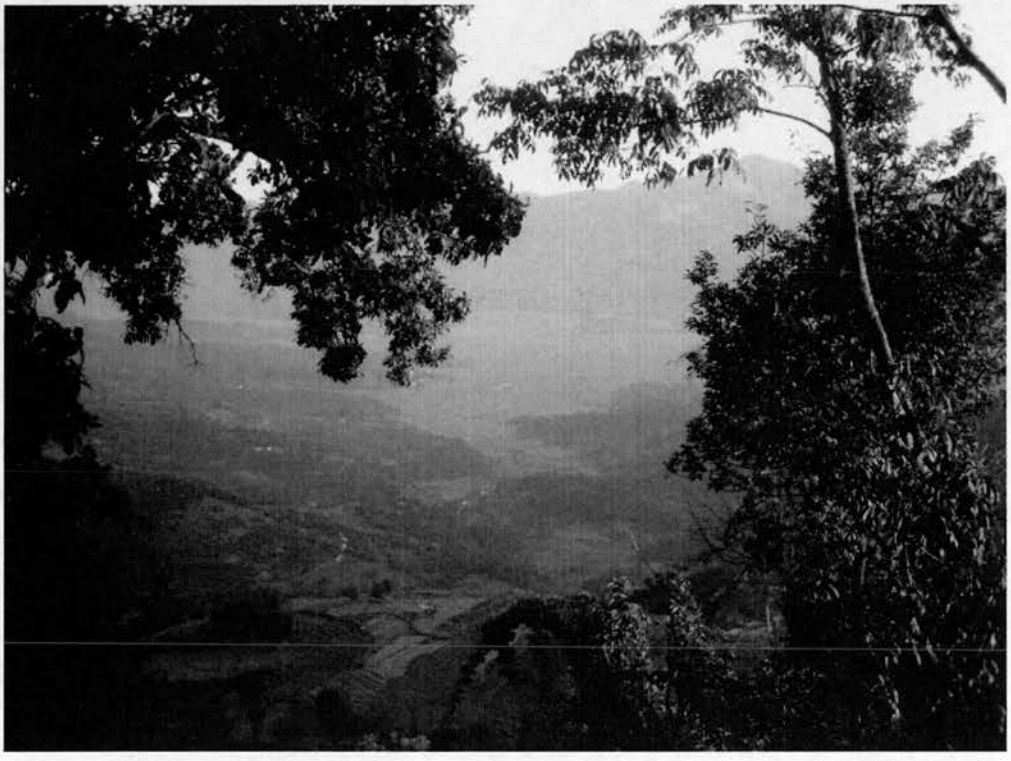

Plate 1.2 Madi Phat, Palpa

Plate 1.3 The village of Yamgha

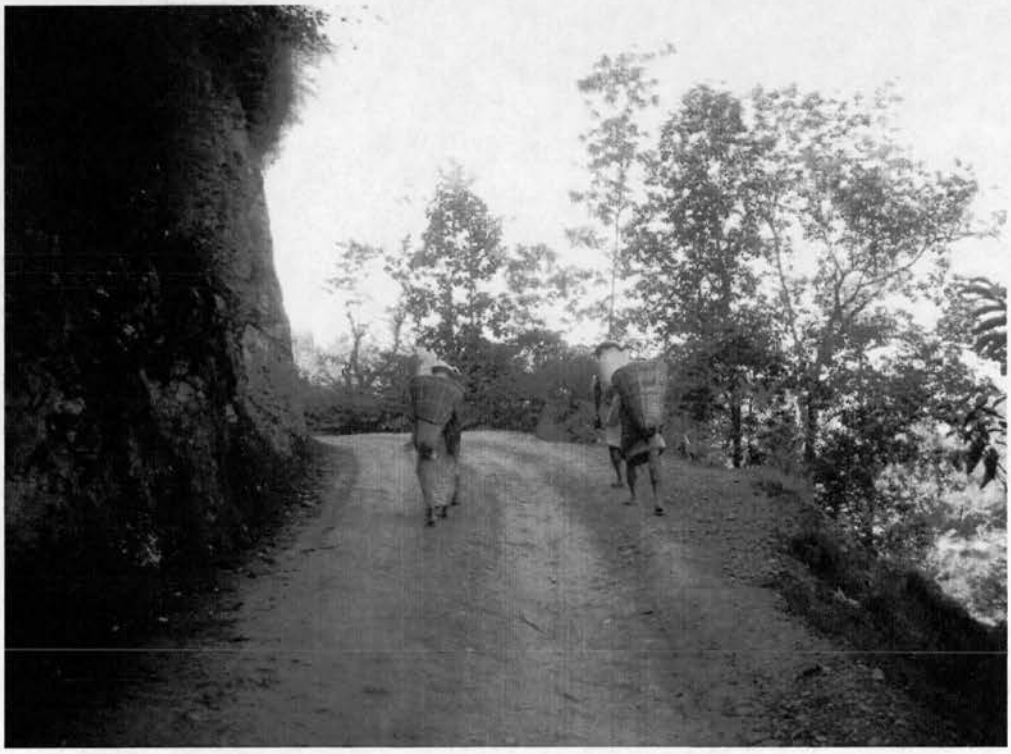

Plate 1.4 People of Yamgha carrying milk to sell in Tansen, Palpa

Chapter II

Fieldwork in the context of conflict: some ethical, methodological and practical issues

In this chapter I draw on my fieldwork in the context of socio-political conflict, as a native researcher, and use it to discuss some issues central to ethnographic fieldwork that played a crucial role in my research process and subsequently to its results. Particular questions that I address in this chapter are: What are the physical, psychological, ethical and methodological challenges that a native researcher faces while conducting fieldwork in the context of conflict? How can one negotiate the fieldwork site, strategy and relationship to conduct the fieldwork in such a context? What are the opportunities of working in the context of conflict?

With growing instability and fierce conflict in different parts of the world, a growing number of social researchers conduct their fieldwork in regions affected by violence, political turmoil and terror. Although the social researcher may or may not be researching conflict and its dynamics, the presence and the engagement of the researcher in a 'field' complicated by talk of 'terrorism', 'terror' and 'complicated political topography' compels him/her to get engaged with these issues. It is simply not possible to ignore these issues. With more social researchers working in the context of conflict, several practical, methodological and ethical issues are emerging as important themes in the academic writings of the last decade. A review shows that there is a growing body of literature on researching violence and socio-political conflict (Hermann, 2001, Sluka, 2000, Sluka, 1995, Smyth and Robinson, 2001) and/or working in the context of conflict and violence (Craig et al., 2000, Kovatas-Bernat, 2002, Lee, 1995, Nordstrom and Robben, 1995, Pettigrew et al., 2004).

Since Howell conducted a survey among anthropologists to measure different hazards that they faced during their fieldwork in multiple settings (Howell, 1990),

the debate on practical issues around the safety and security of the researcher has remained a consistent sub-theme in methodological issues around fieldwork in difficult situations. The concern on practical issues in researching fieldwork in the context of conflict has led to a few publications (Lee, 1995, Nordstrom and Robben, 1995, Pettigrew et al., 2004, Sluka, 1995, Smyth and Robinson, 2001) which argue that dangerous fieldwork is possible with careful planning. There are a few scholars who believe that social researchers working in dangerous field situations have a duty to write against terror (Scheper-Hughes, 1995, Scheper-Hughes, 1992, Taussig, 1984).

'Though some anthropologists have written thoughtfully about their experience with conflict in the field, little mention is made of how the reality of living with violence affects or is edited out of anthropological theory, method, ethics and text' (Kovatas-Bernat, 2002: 208). Thus it is very likely that researchers working in such a situation need to work hard to draw upon the standard research methods yet are faced with special demands made by the complicated field in terms of their safety and security, including some methodological and ethical issues.

Following this introduction, I present a brief outline of the political turmoil in Nepal and its implication for social science research in Nepal. I outline more explicitly the emerging nature of my work and how my interests, fieldwork site, strategies and the results were shaped due to the changing political and security situation in Nepal. While conducting fieldwork in a difficult situation requires foresight, careful planning and alternative strategies to adjust to the often unpredictable situation, it also raises several challenges that are not just in relation to safety and security but also methodological and ethical. Finally, I conclude this chapter by exploring some opportunities for researching in the context of conflict.

Political turmoil and social science research in Nepal

Nepal is geographically located between two emerging superpowers with somewhat contrasting ideologies, China in the north and India in the south, east and west. The

geo-political location of Nepal during the cold war period (mostly during 1960-70s) attracted a large number of social science researchers, mainly Americans and Indians. Another important reason for the flow of foreign social science researchers was due to its rich ethnic and cultural diversity and a freer access for foreign researchers than in other parts of the Himalayan region; and possibly also because many researchers found it a pleasant place to work (Hachethu, 2002).

Since 1996 terror had become a major part of life among Nepalis who found themselves caught in the middle of a war that claimed the lives of more than 13,000 people, apart from shattering the lives, livelihoods, hopes and aspirations of many others. The last ten years (1996-2006) had been characterized by brutal civil conflict that has risen due to front line battles between the RNA (Royal Nepali Army) and the Maoist rebels (*māobādis*), handicapped political parties and the increasing involvement of international players. With the frequent reports of violence, killings and abuse of human rights, Nepal was seen less commonly in the itinerary of tourists who came to explore the mountains and the culture during their holidays. Rather it was increasingly visited by different type of visitors that included mostly human rights activists, foreign correspondents and officials with UN and other humanitarian agencies. The most visible indicator of the deteriorating human rights situation was the opening of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Kathmandu in April 2005. Since the Maoists withdrew from the democratic process in 1996 by holding their red flag in one hand and various weapons in the other hand, the Himalayan Kingdom was increasingly represented more in relation to violent political conflict than in its previous image as a peaceful Shangri-La. The conflict raised international concerns in particular due to its spread within a short period of time, the scale of violence that was witnessed and its potential effect on the stability of its southern neighbour, India. With such developments, the political instability of Nepal increasingly became an international issue of concern that was reflected in the active role played by foreign envoys based in Kathmandu. Following the royal massacre of June 2001 (Parajuli, 2002), the already complex and difficult situation was aggravated by the ambitious steps taken by the new King Gyanendra, who dismissed the last democratically elected

government in October 2002. Eventually he established direct rule. On 1 Feb 2005 he appeared in front of the National Television (NTV) and spoke for 31 minutes to tell the nation that he had dissolved the government, appointed himself as head of the state and declared a state of emergency. He also promised to bring peace, development, good governance and multi-party democracy within three years (Mishra, 2005).[24]

Though social science researchers in Nepal have traditionally worked on socio-economic structure, development and ethnic groups, since the restoration of democracy in 1990, social scientists have begun to highlight the state in their analysis more explicitly. With the declaration of the people's war in 1996 and the worsening political situation, the focus was clearly on the state. This particular context had implications for social science researchers who pursued their academic career in Nepal and also for the new generation of potential social science researchers. There was a growing concern that the changing context led to a decrease in the number of young and experienced social researchers visiting Nepal for their fieldwork. Instead, they were delaying their fieldwork or were opting to carry out their field research in a similar context elsewhere. While there was no clear 'situational danger' to foreign scholars working in Nepal, there may have been issues of 'ambient danger' (Lee, 1995: 3).[25] Some foreign researchers continued to do their fieldwork without facing any danger. Taking the example of the British government's position on the conflict in Nepal, Ian Harper argues that foreign researchers face challenges because of their governments stance on conflict in Nepal (Pettigrew et al., 2004). This was a reason why American academics were finding it quite difficult to do their fieldwork in villages outside of Kathmandu.[26] While it seemed true that foreign researchers were caught in a complicated position, due to

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[24] At the time of writing this thesis, Nepal has undergone major political transformation. Annex I outlines the major political events since 1990.

[25] Lee conceptualized the former as a danger that arises when researcher is exposed to otherwise avoidable dangers simply from having to be a dangerous setting for research to be carried out. In other hand, 'situational danger' arises when the researcher's presence or actions evoke aggression, hostility, or violence from those within the setting.

[26] Exception includes Sara Shneiderman who was researching in Dolakha. For details see PETTIGREW, J., SHNEIDERMAN, S. & HARPER, I. (2004) Relationship, Complicity and Representation. *Anthropology Today,* 20, 20-25.

their foreignness and the position of their governments, comparatively they seemed in a better position than native scholars to write against terror, some native scholars were arrested during the royal coup for speaking against state terror. While the issue of how far academics should represent themselves as activists remains a debatable issue, it is important to acknowledge that native researchers may not have the choice of being an activist in the first instance. Interestingly, though few in number, there were some social science researchers (both foreign and native) who continued their fieldwork in the changing and often difficult political situation in Nepal with a diverse range of issues that may or may not have direct or indirect relations to the ongoing crisis.[27] While the conflict and the issues related to safety and security might have meant the decrease in the number of potential research activities, we must not forget that this was probably one of the most historically significant times to conduct research in Nepal. Whether or not the ongoing political turmoil gave an impetus for research, the implication of working in the context of conflict meant that it was increasingly impossible to ignore the political instability that became a part of life among the subjects of the study.

With this as background, let me now discuss some of the issues which I found crucial during the design and execution of my fieldwork in Nepal. I could not isolate the subject of my study—mobility and livelihoods—from the increasingly complicated ongoing socio-political conflict in Nepal.

Mobility, livelihoods and Maoist Conflict

As I discussed earlier, I was particularly interested in how the concepts of human mobility and livelihoods were understood by the people themselves. Working in the context of conflict meant that I worked hard to avoid any sensitive topic that may be difficult to study and aggravate the situation. While human mobility and livelihoods seemed fairly neutral topics to be researched, my experience showed that it is not possible to think of neutral subjects while researching in societies that are affected by

[27] It is worth mentioning the literary work by two Nepalis who reflect the political instability and violence in their work. WAGLE, N. (2005) *Palpasa Cafe,* Kathmandu, Nepalaya, THAPA, M. (2005) *Forget Kathmandu: An Elegy for Democracy,* Delhi, Penguin Books India..

socio-political conflict. Despite my conscious attempts to keep my research subject distant from the ongoing socio-political conflict, I increasingly found that my research subject was embedded in it. Mobility and livelihoods were related to conflict in different ways. *First*, the Maoists declared the people's war against poverty and exploitation in 1996 and this particular formation had a very strong relationship with migration and mobility. Neo-Marxist and neo-Malthusian discourses on poverty and out-migration from the hills were very dominant in Nepal in general and particularly within the Maoist movement. Maoists conceptualized Nepal as agrarian and a peasant society, and population mobility (mainly labour migration to Indian and recruitment in foreign army) was viewed by the Maoists as a result of poverty, leading to more poverty and desperation. This was reflected in the 40 point demand submitted by the Maoists to the government before they declared the people's war on 17 February 1996 (5 Phāgun 2052 BS). The Maoists demand included controlling the Nepal-India border. Another demand stated, 'Gorkha recruitment centres should be closed and decent jobs should be arranged for recruits'. Additionally, the Maoists asked for a review of the unjust treaty of 1950 between Nepal and India. In one instance, on 20 October 2003, the Maoists had abducted a British Army officer along with 3 soldiers and 3 porters, who were there to recruit hill men, for about 40 hours from a village named Lakhani, north of Pokhara.[28]

There was a significant difference in Maoist's policy on mobility and my research findings. My research findings suggested that recruitment to a foreign army (commonly known as *lāhur jāne*[29]) was a part of life and livelihoods among the hill ethnic groups, whereas the Maoists viewed such recruitment as an exploitation of the recruits. I was particularly interested in the people's understanding of such practices which was ignored in the 'exploitation' discourses promoted by the Maoists. Likewise, my fieldwork among the households that had members working in India showed that it was very difficult to consider such mobility only in terms of exploitation. The control and regulation of the Nepal-India border would possibly

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[28] An indepth coverage of this incidence can be found in a page long article titled 'Running for Riches in the Great Gurkha Race' by Audrey Gillan that appeared in Guardian Weekly (December 16-22 2005).

[29] I discuss the local meanings of *lāhur jāne* in Chapter V and VI

affect the poorer people who sought their livelihoods through their mobility across the border in Indian cities.

Second, at the time of socio-political conflict and the escalation of violence, human mobility was extremely constrained by the frequent attacks, ambushes, *chakkā jām*[30], *nākābandi*[31], *Nepal band*[32] and frequent security checks. There were frequent fearsome incidents like ambushes and confrontations between state forces and the Maoists in and around my fieldwork area. Frequent *chākkā jām*, organized by the Maoists and its sister organisations at different levels, made it extremely difficult to travel; it had been one of the protest methods used by the opposition political parties since the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990 and the Maoists since 1996. Both the declared and undeclared curfew was common in the cities and highways, mostly at night.[33] The right to movement was highly constrained. I could not move for several days due to strikes and road blocks; I was forced to stay at home. The daily commuting between the town (where I stayed) and the village (where I carried my fieldwork) meant that I was constantly moving between the area controlled by the State (overtly) and the area controlled by the *māobādis* (covertly). During my travels, I was advised by the Chief District Officer (CDO) to talk to the security personnel politely and answer their questions without hesitation, but it was not easy for me for different reasons. I heard many stories in the news and from the villagers, teachers and health workers in the study area about harassment from security forces. While many villagers complained that the RNA abused (mainly verbally) them on route and in their own villages, I was verbally abused twice in a threatening voice in my 14 encounters with the RNA on the way back to Tansen, my base. One of my research assistants in the village told me that previously was badly beaten by the RNA while travelling on the roof of the jeep from Tansen to the village. Almost every day when I walked back from the village, I met the RNA men patrolling and

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[30] A very common method of strike by stopping vehicular movement
[31] A common practice of strike by imposing blockades.
[32] A practice of strike by shutting down of the whole country TAMANG, A., NEPAL, B., PURI, M. & SHRESTHA, D. (2001) Sexual Behaviour and Risk Perception among Young Men in Border Towns of Nepal. *Asia Pacific Population Journal,* 16, 195-210..
[33] There were daytime curfews after the riot broke out in Kathmandu following the massacre of 12 Nepali workers in Iraq and in the aftermath of royal take over.

one or two of them would question me about my presence there—where was I coming from?, why did I come here? What was inside my bag? What was written in the notebook, why did I write what I wrote? What type of research was this? Why did I come to the village to do the study? Were there Maoists in the village? Did I meet them? These were the repeated questions I faced when I met security personnel on route. I replied to them 'politely' about my student status using my ID cards (both my university ID and citizenship card) and they would let me go ahead after intense questioning which once lasted for more than one hour. In one instance, an RNA man dressed in civilian clothes with his modern weapon pointing at me told me that it was not right for me to walk around the village doing 'research' and asked me to go and stay at home.

While the Maoists' strategy was to advocate the control of people's movements, there was evidence that the current socio-political conflict had forced a number of people to move out of the village, displaced people. While there was a lack of systematic study on this particular phenomenon, there was a consensus among my informants that more people were moving out of their village in search of their livelihoods.

Third, mobility was one of the fundamental elements of the Maoist's movement, whose strategy was to organize peasants in the hinterland first and then move towards the towns and cities. It was a central element in the Maoists movement, where the rebels were always moving to spread their influence, launching against the 'enemy' and ensuring their own security. Being a part of the Maoist movement required one to move out of the home, and be posted away from the family; to ensure security and avoid any emotional issues that might arise while working in the home village or area. This was reflected in my household survey in the study area where four men, who had joined the Maoists, were absent from their household. Such a situation meant that I had to be more careful in carrying out the survey and maintaining the data and their confidentiality. I shall come back to this issue later in this chapter.

Here, I have shown that mobility was very much a part of the ongoing socio-political conflict in Nepal. Thus any social research or analysis in such a context must take account of the socio-political conflict as our assumptions regarding ordinary interrelations and social institutions are affected by conflict.

Violence and danger

It is important for the researcher to survive to tell the story. As I indicated earlier, ongoing conflict and the often unpredictable security situation in Nepal meant that there were severe restrictions on my mobility. I was doing my fieldwork at the time of significant militarization that reportedly resulted in increased violence, brutal killings, kidnappings, torture and disappearances. It was impossible to ignore the RNA soldiers in the streets asking for identity cards and checking personal belongings. Violent tactics used by the Maoists resulted in a repressive response from the state which included suspension of human rights, restricted movement, repression of freedom of speech, massive military deployment and various intensive search operations. The Maoists in response took more militarized action in similar fashion throughout Nepal involving killings, abductions, blockades, ambushes, torture and many more. The ground situation was extremely unpredictable and often dangerous. In the absence of free and reliable media, often rumour which contained fear and potential danger was the only source of information.[34]

Let us consider the following email sent to me by one of my young research assistant who came from Tansen.[35]

From: Research Assistant
To: Jeevan Raj Sharma
Date: Wed 8, Feb 2006

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[34] Rumours remain an important theme in my fieldwork experience and I talk about rumours in relation to my fieldwork later in this section.

[35] I have reproduced the email written to me by one of my research assistants, who is an 18 year old young boy from Tānsen. For the purpose of confidentiality I have replaced his name with 'Research Assistant'. To give the sense of what exactly he wrote to me, I have reproduced it exactly.

hi
we all are fine here... n our house was hit by a bullet... glasses arr broken... the tansen durbar is converted into ashes... its all burned.... n so is the condition of the gate that is oppposite to nanglo.mul dhoka..... every thing is destroyed here.. the phone lines all are dead... only some are running.. n the bandh of maoist is making things even worse... we all in family didnt sleep the whole night.. it was so long attack... and how to describe.. the maoist used people home as their shelter.... n fired bullets frm there.... they too came in the roof of our house.. thanks to god that no civilians reported dead... ... n they were abut 15000.. single gallli galli of tansen was full of maoist... the army n police knewed that they were gonna attack but they kept queit..... meldhara ko mill bhayeko ghar ma night vision le attack garda launcher le lagera ghar ma dherai damage bhayeko cha.. hotel shreenagar is also wrost hit.. till today also the amry are diffusing bombs.....i have collected the khokas of the bullet... teh bombs were scatterd here n there.....everything is destroted here this much for now.. i am goin to ktm in a week. mail u later..... lucky to survive.. thinking of getting a new life frm that day,..... Research Assistant

This was the email he sent to me in the aftermath of *māobādi's* attack in Tansen that caused the destruction of the city and took the lives of 20 people. In the six months after I completed my fieldwork in Nepal and returned to Edinburgh, Tansen saw a devastating attack by the Maoists. This email gives a glimpse of what it was like to 'be there' at the time of the attack in Tansen, the town where I was based. During my fieldwork rumours were common, both in the village and the town, that the *māobādis* had been planning to attack Tansen at any time. The fieldwork area did not witness any intense clash between the RNA and the Maoists, except a few confrontations in remote villages. While I was fortunate not to be in Tansen during the attack, it was a place where I had met many of my informants who lived in terror.

The danger and threat to life was very much apparent when I was travelling by bus from Tansen to Kathmandu on 2 April 2005. On the way to Kathmandu, the bus I was in, as well as others, was escorted by at least two RNA mine protected vehicles. While beginning the journey most of the people in the bus including me, were unaware that the next day would be declared by the Maoists as *Nepal band.* Our bus was running late due to frequent security checks which led to long queue of vehicles, and I was hoping that we would reach Kathmandu before mid-night. As our bus was moving along a road affected by land slides, I suddenly heard a loud noise; there was

a big cloud of dust outside the window. All the passengers on the bus were in panic. I crouched below the seat, like many others, until the firing that followed the blast had stopped. Later, I saw a big hole on the road with one of the RNA mine protected vehicle hit by the mine. The windscreen of the bus just before ours smashed causing minor injuries to a few passengers. After about an hour, the journey continued and I arrived in Kathmandu at midnight. None of the Kathmandu newspapers carried the news, except one newspaper which reported the event two days later.

The overall security situation in Nepal underwent a drastic change in the aftermath of the royal coup on 1 February 2005. The day before the royal takeover, I knew through my sources that 'something was going to happen tomorrow' (*bholi kehi hudaicha re*)[36]. I kept getting text messages in the night from my friends and relatives (mostly government employees) that the King was going to give a speech at 10am the next day and some of my friends predicted that something serious was going to take place. The rumours went on until King Gyanendra staged the royal coup on 1 February. During the king's speech when I tried to make phone my friends I realized that neither the landline phone nor the mobile phone was working. For some time I thought it was a technical error, but then realized only the Nepal Television (NTV) news channel was operating. As the king was making his speech, all the phone lines and internet connection were cut; electronic and print media houses were under stiff control by the RNA. A journalist friend in Kathmandu did not have a job as, in his words 'there is no news to be written'; the RNA officers were stationed in the media houses editing the newspapers. It was a state of fear as the rumours began to circulate that the leaders and activists were arrested in different parts of the country, including my own neighbour who was arrested by plain clothes security men. I was surprised to see the arrest of political activists who were known only locally as being aligned to one of the other political parties. From the next day onwards I went regularly to Naya Baneshwor Chowk (about 10 minutes walk from my house which has emerged as a space for political discussions and mobilization in recent years) just to see if I could get some news about what was going on. I realized that many people came to Naya Baneshwor Chowk just to find out that there

[36] This phrase is usually used at the time of circulation of rumours of different types.

was no news; the armed security personnel were threatening people not to wander around the area. When I wanted to take pictures in Naya Baneshwor, I was not allowed to do so by an RNA soldier. Many anxious people wandered around the street consciously avoiding saying anything that would be perceived as against the royal takeover. The published newspapers did not contain any news about the mass arrests of political leaders and activists, only news on the royal takeover with big pictures of the king and the new supporting cabinet. Some of the popular newspapers that did not want to carry the editorial in support of the royal takeover published editorials titled: '*cricket khelne mahilā* (women who play cricket)'[37], 'appreciating the weather'[38], 'socks in society'[39], '*hariyo ban Nepal ko dhan'* (green forests, the treasury of Nepal)[40] and so on. A glimpse at these editorials gave us a sense that the fundamental right of freedom of expression was suspended, leaving editors to protest by writing editorials creatively. Fundamental rights were constrained and the dangers were many.

Before I left Edinburgh, I went through a detailed safety and security assessment using the 'Research Ethics Policy and Procedures' at the School of Social and Political Studies, and developed my strategy accordingly. In my case it was impossible to assume that there was no foreseeable risk (physical or psychological) at the design phase. When I decided to go to the rural hills in Nepal for my fieldwork some of my friends thought that it was not a carefully thought out plan. In the face of growing media reports on violence from Nepal, such an attitude was perfectly understandable. In my analysis, the media was not always be the best source to assess the fieldwork situation from afar, as the media tended to over-represent certain situations while under-representing others. The media appeared to me mainly interested in the violent incidents; there were other situations where the media had restricted access to information where issues were too complicated to be reported on a journalist's short visit. Furthermore, unpredictability and the volatile nature of the field meant that any information of the fieldwork situation was

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[37] This was the tile of editorial in Kantipur daily (dated 4 February 2005).
[38] This was the title of editorial in the Kathmandu Post (dated 4 February 2005).
[39] This was the title of editorial in the Kathmandu Post (dated 5 February 2005)
[40] This was the tile of editorial in Nepali Times (dated 5-10 February 2005)

temporary. I consulted with friends, colleagues and family back in Nepal about the possibility of doing fieldwork and they provided me with detailed information which helped me to make decisions accordingly. While I was aware that conducting research in such a context would be difficult, or even impossible if the situation deteriorated, I was equally aware that my own friends, family and relatives were living and working in the same condition. Though the university did not provide specific training on these issues, the discussion with supervisors proved very useful to me. I devised an objective tool to assess the dangers and accordingly an alternative research design in case I needed to withdraw or terminate my fieldwork.[41] Danger was very difficult to measure from a distance but it was equally difficult to measure by 'being there' in the field. While local people were mostly the best source of information about safety and security, they were usually unaware of the context (the national or international developments on the issue) and its implications for danger in the fieldwork site. Thus, it was useful to measure the risk both from a distance and by being there; the ignorance of either of these perspectives might increase risk. This has implications for researchers interested in studying different aspects of violent socio-political conflict, particularly insurgency movements, where single-sited ethnographic fieldwork might be less useful than 'multi-sited ethnography' (Marcus, 1998).

I was told by several villagers that RNA soldiers often came to the village in a tactical way i.e. a group of Army men stayed just outside the village while 3-4 of them came in a dress like the Maoists and started inquiring if people had seen their 'friends' (meaning the Maoists). Several villagers told me that at times it was very difficult to distinguish between the security forces and the Maoists. A teacher told me that the Maoists were softer spoken than the RNA and there would be at least one woman in the Maoists' group, while the RNA group would only have the men. He told me that they came in a group of 3-4 without wearing uniform and these RNA men often had long hair. This remained an important fear for me. After about 3 months I started wandering around the village talking to people on a diverse range of topics related to mobility. I discovered that I was often followed by the Maoists and

[41] Please find the tool I prepared in Annex IV.

later I was asked not to move around the village on my own. Later I continued my fieldwork in Kathmandu and India. After the royal takeover on the 1 Feb 2005, things were not so easy in Kathmandu. Neither was it considered safe to travel out of Kathmandu. From that day till the time I left Nepal, Kathmandu seemed like an isolated valley, with limited travel in and out of the valley.

Identity

At the design stage, I was very aware that my research into the issues of poverty, marginalization, social exclusion, mobility and livelihoods could lead the people in the field to believe that I was a Maoist sympathizer, given the fact that Maoists declared the war against the state in the name of poverty and marginalization. Shneiderman describes a complex situation where her work on ethnicity identity was perceived as pro-Maoists (ethnic identity and marginalization) and she was given access by the villagers (whom she describes as Maoists supporters) and the Maoists themselves (Pettigrew et al., 2004). It seems that Shneiderman did not confront the other side of the issue i.e. problems in such a situation from the side of the security forces in the frontline. To me, it was a significant problem, which made it equally difficult to be perceived as taking sides as Shneinderman was perceived by people, because it could threaten my own security and safety. It was a real danger as there was much evidence that perceived Maoists sympathizers were questioned, detained or 'disappeared' by the security forces in Nepal. During my fieldwork days, a native student of sociology was held captive on the charge of spying for state intelligence. She was kept for over a week by the Maoist rebels in far-western Nepal, along with her colleague, when she was carrying out her field research. In the light of such developments, I frequently reviewed safety and security, often by consulting the locals. Additionally, as indicated earlier, the assessment form helped me to objectively assess issues related to personal safety and security. As I indicated above, since there was no clear boundary between the areas controlled by the conflicting parties, I made careful judgments and adjust myself according to the context I was placed in. I learned this from the people in the villages who faced both the Maoists and the RNA in their day to day life.

My position as a researcher offered both advantages and disadvantages, and opportunities and constraints. The question then was—was it possible for me as an insider to work without taking sides? As a social researcher who himself was a member of society and of a specific socio-political group, I was a part of it (Hermann, 2001). This meant that I could in no way detach myself from the ongoing conflict in Nepal. The very conceptualisation of the ethnographer as 'other' was no longer useful.

I argue that it is important to use multiple identities which may very well be perceived as deceiving and ethically inappropriate. We must acknowledge that a researcher carries different 'selves', apart from the researcher self (Reinharz, 1997: 5). In my case, I was a researcher, a student in a British university, a native, a man, the nephew of Bishnu doctor[42], a graduate in social work and development studies, a middle class person from Kathmandu and a Bahun among others. When the Maoists were fighting against the system calling it unjust, I continued with my further education with opportunities to study in Kathmandu and abroad. By default, the system that the Maoists were fighting against was largely favourable to me. I agree that it was impossible to be neutral (Nash, 1976) but, equally I found that it was difficult to take sides. Taking sides openly during the fieldwork would have made it extremely difficult to do fieldwork when the boundary between the space controlled by the rebels and the state was not very clear. I found it easier to characterise the people in the village who dealt with both the Maoists and the RNA in a tactical way. While in the village with the people, I kept myself as someone not interested in the Maoists movement, however, I supported the demands of the Maoists whenever I found that people around me were sympathetic to them. While in Tansen, I acted more neutral by representing someone who was not interested in the Maoists. When I was interacting with the RNA, I was a faithful Nepali citizen.

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[42] My distant uncle who has been working in that village as Village Health Worker for more than 5 years; was known as Bishnu doctor.

While writing this chapter I recalled my visits to government offices in Tansen where I met many officials and reviewed documents that were reduced to ashes. I was emotionally attached to Tansen as it was the town where I was brought up and went to school. Overall, it was impossible for me avoid the emotional plight of those studied and I kept strong feelings about the behaviour of the armed parties that shaped my frame of reference for the ongoing conflict in Nepal. In the face of human suffering and terror, for example, I found it difficult to remain neutral but felt it was important to speak against the terror and destruction.

Access

Access was a very important yet a very difficult issue. In the context where the boundary between space controlled by the rebels and the state was not very clear, who was to give access? Who was the legitimate authority to give access? The fact that I was required to gain access from both the government of Nepal and the parallel government known as *jan sarkār*[43] formed by the Maoists, meant that I was acknowledging the presence of two systems of governance. While personally I was not ready to accept the parallel state formed by the Maoists, as I believe that much of their support was derived on the back of arms and violence, for the purpose of my fieldwork and to ensure my own safety and security, it was important for me to acknowledge that. Gaining access from two parties fighting in the war meant that I had to act accordingly and be loyal to their own rules/regulation in the blurred spaces that they 'occupied'.

As I indicated in Chapter I, my access to do fieldwork in a village in Palpa was negotiated by my relationship with the village health worker, who had been working in the village for more than five years. His contact with the Maoists and the people in the village made it easier for me to enter the village without any objection from the Maoist's side. It was a difficult choice to make; the very fact that I was negotiating with the Maoists for access to work in the village meant that I legitimized

[43] It literally means people's government. It was the run by the Maoist party at the different levels of governance (village, district, regional). The most popular aspect of 'people's government' was its own judiciary/court system.

their rule/strong hold in the village, which in many ways went against my own government's understanding. If I was to follow my government's position, I would be forbidden to get access from the Maoists who were labelled as 'terrorists'. Negotiating the access meant that I had to compromise my own ideology.

In Tansen I used my personal network with the CDO (Chief District Officer) to get the 'official' and 'insider' information on safety and security. This way, I was in a better position to access the field and assess the potential danger in my fieldwork area. As discussed above, since there was no clear boundary between the areas controlled by the conflicting parties, this implied that I had to make careful judgments and adjust myself according to the situation I was placed in.

A major challenge remained in how one should represent what was seen in the field. While the Maoists were very much present in the village, they were not always visible. The VDC (Village Development Committee) secretaries were not staying in the village but in Tansen; the VDC offices had been locked by the Maoists. The Sub-Health Post (SHP) and schools were running but the teachers and health workers in one SHP told me that they paid a 13 day salary as a tax to the Maoists. The teachers and health workers showed me the receipts that they got which clearly indicated what they had paid towards the Maoist's people's government. The receipt was a testimony of payment to the Maoists and this ensured their security and safety from the Maoists, while it kept them in constant danger from the RNA. If the RNA found these documents, it would have led to a fearful situation. People I met often discussed various political issues but preferred not to make direct judgment on the issues relating to Maoists or the RNA.

Some of my fieldwork experience challenged my own assumptions about the support for the Maoists. It was true that the Maoists had established themselves strongly in the minds of the people but it was equally true that most of the support was because of fear and apathy. I found that often the human rights and journalistic accounts of 'village under the control of the Maoists' were not true, as the boundary of the control was not clear and 'people caught in between the state and the Maoists' did

not always hold true; people developed tactics to negotiate the complexity developed by the conflict.

Methodological issues

Working in the context of conflict meant that there were several methodological issues associated with it. Before I went to the field, I had predicted that I might be under surveillance as every new person aroused suspicious in such a context. I was aware of the danger that my ethnographic fieldwork looked quite suspicious to the people and the parties involved in the war. The nature of my study required me to stay in the village for several months interacting with different people, recoding my data and maintaining its confidentiality. Therefore I was prepared to face stiff confrontation and if the situation did not favour my fieldwork, then I was willing to withdraw to consider an alternative research design.

The standard mode of conducting ethnographic fieldwork by staying in one area for a longer time was neither useful nor desired to me. Neither my informants in the village nor I considered that to be the option as I did not feel secure staying in the village and I preferred to return to Tansen. Everyday I travelled from the town to the village in the morning and returned to Tansen in the evening. As it became increasingly difficult to continue with my fieldwork, I terminated my fieldwork in the village to proceed with my fieldwork in Kathmandu and India. This meant that my earlier plan to get engaged in extensive anthropological fieldwork in Palpa by staying in the village house for a longer period faced constraints as I did not remain for safety reasons. Pettigrew suggests that multi-sited ethnography may be the best model of fieldwork in the areas affected by conflict (Pettigrew et al., 2004). Justifying the use of multi-sited fieldwork Pettigrew writes, 'in a single location, while there are the obvious problems of undertaking research in a dangerous and volatile situation and the heightened risks of long-term exposure, there are also additional problems such as drawing attention to the research, the researchers and/or the host community, which could have widespread and negative implications for all concerned' (Pettigrew et al., 2004: 23). Quite opposite to the standard method of

fieldwork, with its emphasis on rapport and immersion, the long term stay in the fieldwork area appeared to lead to unnecessary suspicion and psychological stress. The very identification of the research as a survey by the people made it difficult for me to wander around the village asking different questions without using any visible tools (e.g. Survey form). I felt that the very idea of ethnography led to suspicion where I participated and observed, without making it explicit that I was studying all the time by 'being there'.

Suspicion and surveillance in the context of violent conflict meant that 'rapport', understood as central in ethnographic fieldwork, was not always reached. Therefore, what are the implications for ethnographic fieldwork where rapport and immersion have always been understood as the central concepts?

Drawing the concept of complicity from Marcus (1998) Shneiderman argues that it may be a more useful concept than rapport to represent our relationship with the people that we study in the context of violence where relationship is mediated by the invisible third (Pettigrew et al., 2004). The concept of complicity was useful, as any form of relationship with the subject was mediated by the security and safety concerns. The implication of 'being a native' and being involved in the political topography meant that I was no longer an ethnographer strictly following methodological tradition as found in classical ethnography.

Given that some people from the village households had joined the Maoists, it was difficult to ask specific questions related to household members and their mobility. During the household survey, I was interested in the detailed socio-economic background of the household members, including their mobility, if any. In cases where the household members were away, my plan was to ask the address of these mobile members so that I could trace them to their destinations. This led to suspicion in some of the households as they wondered why I was interested in getting the details and the addresses of these mobile members. While I did explain to them that I was interested to meet them for my study, I later learned that two of the households, whose sons had joined the Maoists, became very suspicious of my

activities in the village. Similarly, it was difficult to ask questions related socio-economic status (land ownership, income and expenditure) for the reasons of potential abuse by the Maoists.

For me the issue was how to respond if the security forces or the Maoist activists demanded access to the information that I had collected. In order to do the most possible to maintain the safety and security of the informants and to protect their privacy and the confidentiality of the research, the anonymity of my informants and others I talked to had to be maintained. Though there was a lot of interesting information about the movement of the Maoists, I did not write these into my diary. Rather, I tried to memorize them to be written once I returned to Tansen. At the village I had to be extremely conscious of note taking as it always aroused curiosity and suspicion in the people around me. While some people expected me to write as a student researcher and were keen to read what I was writing, other people were more suspicious about me writing in my small note book. A few people often even asked me, often in a tea shop, if they could see what I had written on that day and asked the person accompanying me[44] about my visit of the day. I always felt that I was being watched, observed and followed which had a direct implication for my writing and work. It was stressful. This became clearer when I realized later that such information was sought by many other people, without my knowledge, who were the local supporters of the Maoists.[45] The content of my fieldwork i.e. what I did in the village, what type of questions I asked and what I would take back from the village, was under close observation, which I realised more in the later part of my fieldwork.

I wrote my fieldnotes after returning to Tansen, but it did not contain a detailed description of my daily visits and 'sensitive' interaction in the village. After my

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[44] There were three people who accompanied me, when needed, during my fieldwork in the village—*Bishnu uncle* (aged 45), an unmarried Bahun boy (aged 27) who had returned from Middle East and a married Magar man (aged 28) who worked as a postman on a contract basis within the village.

[45] They never came to me directly asking these questions; neither did they ever introduce themselves to me as the Maoists. Villagers would often talk about them being the Maoists in secret but would never talk about it in public. I was told that these people would never be seen as Maoists in public but would be the informants of the Maoists.

visits when I returned to Tansen and started writing, I relied mostly on my recall and some rough notes, which Ottemberg calls 'scratch notes' (Ottemberg, 1990: 144-146) and Sanjek calls 'head notes' (Sanjek, 1990b: 95-97). I found head notes quite useful in the particular context that I was working in. The importance of head notes can be seen in the work of Anthropologists like Margaret Mead's work in Manus and Srinivasan's much discussed work 'the remembered village' (Sanjek, 1990a). Although writing 'scratch notes' raised suspicion to some, it was important for me to write something as there would be many other people who would expect me to write something and of course it was useful to me. I feel that the identity of a researcher rested mostly on the recording of the information. Writing 'scratch notes' was something like changing the role from a participant to that of an observer. I detached myself from participation and made a space for myself to write something down. I usually made 'scratch notes' after interacting with someone in the village for lengthy time (usually more than 15-20 minutes) or when I had free time in the health post or inside the tea shop while waiting for tea.

All this implied that the recording of the information was done carefully, not disclosing the identity of the informants and not writing the sensitive issues in the fieldnotes at the village level, but rather relying more on memory. Pettigrew argues that disguising information, informants and a research site could not just be questionable but could also be perceived as the first step towards the creation of an unaccountable fantasy world (Pettigrew et al., 2004). In all cases, I got 'informed consent' from all respondents to become the subjects of the research process and for the use of data collected during interviews and talks with them. I provided information on: the purpose of collecting the information, how the responses would be handled, including confidentiality, and how it would be used, in a simple and understandable way before each encounter. It is an ethical responsibility not to disclose sensitive information and the informants, but one must be realistic about the power that a social researcher has in the context of civil conflict. Likewise, the issue of what we mean by informed consent remains a central one, as the researcher himself/herself is vulnerable in the context of conflict.

Conclusion

My fieldwork experience in Nepal showed that conflict had implications for the field, the research subject and the methodology. The field was no longer safe, the research subject could no longer be detached from conflict and the traditional research methods did not always work, leaving the researchers with new challenges. This was not just in relation to safety and security but also ethical and methodological challenges.

I suggested that we need new strategies and training to work in the context of socio-political conflict where social relations and cultural relations are shaped by what I call terror, terrorism and complicated political topography. It is accepted that knowledge developed through social research is not only dependent on what data we collect but equally on under what conditions and context we collect the data. This implies that we are faced with methodological issues as the violent research context adversely affects the way in which we collect our data and interpret it.

My native identity meant that it was impossible for me to detach myself from the ongoing socio-political conflict; I was not just a researcher but a native coming from a particular class, gender, caste and ideological background. Research ethics which saw a researcher as a powerful agent did not seem useful as I found myself in a vulnerable position. In such a context it was impossible to imagine myself being capable of guaranteeing the security of the informants. The ethical guidelines did not adequately address the complex issues around researching violent conflict as it assumed that the researcher was powerful and had control over the subject, methodology and the data. It had colonial assumptions that the researcher had the backing of powerful institutions like the state which did not always hold true for me. I was a vulnerable researcher with no consistent support from the state. The unpredictability of the fieldwork situation made the entire fieldwork process stressful and I found the backup plan to be very useful. As discussed above, research in a dangerous setting was possible and the risks associated with researching dangerous social situations could be negotiated, if approached with careful planning.

I do not think it is possible to propose a model to work in a region affected by such conflict. It is important to be flexible and evaluate explicitly the possibility of danger, its potential sources, and how it might be managed or exacerbated by the actions of the researcher. In such a situation, it is very important to confront difficulties with a serious 'objective' assessment of the safety and security issues involved in it. One would benefit from the experience of others, who have worked in a similar situation, and plan the fieldwork with careful consideration of potential risks and worse case scenarios that could be encountered in the field. It is impossible to imagine problem free research in dangerous situations, rather it needs to be seen as an opportunity.

'Being there' means that there is certainly a chance to give voice to the people whose voices are silenced by the discourses on conflict, peace, human rights and so on. It is important for researchers to acknowledge that there is no other way by which we can understand how people live their everyday life without being there. Fieldwork might open avenues for better prospects for the people that we study, which is not the same as finding a peaceful solution that many policy makers prefer to think. I am suggesting that better understanding of the 'underdogs'[46] will help to move towards a democratization of voices. From my experience I can confidently say that it has empowered me, it has challenged some of my own assumptions and understanding about my own identity and community. Lastly, researching in the conflict situation offers a somewhat rare opportunity to speak against terror. Social researchers have the responsibility to give people voice. Silencing itself is dehumanizing.

[46] The use of plural is intentional to state my point that there may be many underdogs.

Plate 2.1 Village Development Committee Office in Yamgha, locked by the Maoists

Plate 2.2 Aftermath of Maoists attack in February 2005, Tansen

Chapter III

Where is mobility?

Academic construction of population mobility in the hills of Nepal

This chapter focuses on a review of existing scholarship on the Nepali hill population with the intention of searching for an understanding of human mobility. At the outset, I must make it clear that I do not aim to present a comprehensive catalogue of scholarly work on the hill people of Nepal, rather my approach is guided very much by the nature of the enquiry of my thesis. Thus I review some of the key scholarly work based on the following criteria:

- Focussed on the population in the western central hills or similar context within Nepal.
- Subject matter of the study is on issues relating to people's livelihoods, particularly with their focus on mobility.
- Impact on public knowledge, public policies and academic debate.

The differences in the scholarly construction of rural hill people in Nepal, particularly in relation to mobility, are provocative. Despite the fact that almost all the social scientists working in the region have noted different forms of mobility in their fieldwork, there is a strong tendency in the early scholarly work to view life in the hills of Nepal largely as a discrete and timeless society unaffected by the outside world. Furthermore, while a few recent studies clearly indicate the importance of mobility in social change and people's livelihoods, they largely view mobility as peripheral variables and/or within economic framework with little insight into their socio-cultural dimensions. In different ways, this 'sedentary bias' (Malkki, 1995: 208) is seen influential in the scholarly works on Nepal. Hutt's study of 'Nepali literary representations of migraion to India and Bhutan' (Hutt, 1998) and

'representation of Gurkha soldier in Nepali literature' (Hutt, 1989) shows that such aberrant view of mobility is equally evident in Nepali literature. While differences exist in the studies in terms of their subject matter, approach and methodology, I identified four major representations in the scholarly work on rural population and their livelihoods in the context of the Nepali hills. *First*, a few influential scholarly work represent rural communities in the hills of Nepal as closed, immobile, agrarian and traditional. *Second*, mobility is represented as unusual, and often a threat to the hill economy, society and culture. It is viewed as an exception and often a crisis, leading to some other crisis. *Third*, while 'livelihoods' is a recurrent phrase in the scholarly work on migration in the latter years, there is a methodological issue in existing research on migration, where it is treated as a dependent variable in the larger equation involving economic imbalances between different regions and class. The understanding of mobility is largely limited to counting numbers and appropriating them in terms of exiting models, typologies and categories. *Four*, a few studies provide useful insights into the social meanings of some forms of mobility and their relationships to ethnic identity.

Before I dissect each of these formulations, I will locate them within two different contexts in which these are found. First, I will place these representations within the broader intellectual context of social science, particularly social anthropology and development studies. Second, an overview of the emergence and growth of social science research in Nepal will help us to understand the production of such views in the context of Nepal.

Disciplinary Context

Following Kearney, I take issue with western anthropological construction of bounded communities, peasantry and agrarian society with little or no mobility (Kearney, 1996). Social sciences, in particular anthropology and development studies, have played an important role in the construction of a category called 'peasants'. Although, it is not my purpose here to provide a critical assessment of

these disciplines, nonetheless I find it useful to discuss their few key features to help us understand the treatment of mobility in these disciplines.

Dualism

Traditionally the discipline of anthropology is constructed and practiced in dualism i.e. oppositional difference between modern and primitive. Placing himself in the global phase, Kearney describes four periods of anthropological discourse: formative (1880-1920), classic (1920-45), modern (1945-89), and global (1989-?). The 'modern discourse' of our very recent past is seen as being fuelled by a progressive ideology in which the 'development' of what was then the Third World, inhabited by peasants, was problematic and accepted by most anthropologists. During this period, many anthropologists studied 'modern peasants' rather than the 'primitive' of classical anthropological discourse, a type Kearney finds to be entirely contradictory. Peasantry is a concept appropriate to 'feudal' societies, and no social systems have been remotely feudal since the early 19th century. Kearney uses Eric Wolf's 1955 typology of peasants to show how poorly the universal category of peasant fits into the 20th century, when most of the people whom we call peasants are part-time workers in the informal economy and everywhere are flooding to the cities (Kearney, 1996).

What is perhaps very striking here is the representation of peasantry as immobile. The preference of western anthropologists to analyse complex phenomenon in terms of dualism contributed to the idea of immobile peasantry. The divisions between urban and rural, migrant and non-migrant are regular themes in the literature. There is a great dualism between the nomadic tribesman and the sedentary agriculturalist or for that matter between people who live in cities and who live in villages. According to this image of peasantry there is no reason to look for employment outside the peasant mode of existence which is highly localized (Kearney, 1996); neither is there any attention given to any form of human mobility.

The discipline of development studies has followed the footsteps of anthropological constructions. Despite varying theoretical perspectives, the idea of a stable, poor, and traditional community is central to the applied discipline of development studies. Its powerful metaphor has led to the emergence of ministries, departments, programmes and voluntary organisations. The universities in the north and recently in the south have started to offer courses in development studies. Likewise, some social sciences have expanded the scope of their discipline by incorporating development as a part of its subject—sociology of development, anthropology of development, development management, development administration, and development economics among many others. The pioneering and still powerful paradigm of the modernisation school of thought takes the gap between wealthier and poor nations as the reference point for analyses (Roberts and Hite, 2000). A dichotomy is set up—development and underdevelopment as modern and traditional respectively. The main aim of modernization, therefore, is a process to bridge the gap between traditional and modern (Esteva, 1991). The theoretical heritage of this paradigm is largely drawn from Evolutionary theory and Functionalist theory. As Roberts and Hite suggest, in different ways theorists like Durkheim and Tonnies provided many of the basic themes of present day modernization theory, in particular their contract between traditional and modern societies (Roberts and Hite, 2000).

Bounded Place

Apart from these formulations, another assumption of classical anthropology is bounded space, which suggests that local community must be the object of study. In this sense, the community's relations with the rest of the world are of secondary interest to the ethnographer, if it is considered important at all. Even though peasantry itself is considered to come into being only when connections to a dominant outside group has been established, classical anthropologists tend to focus on the community as a coherent and independent entity and the relationship with the wider world is often ignored (Kearney, 2004). Despite the observation that young boys in New Guinea spent several years away from their villages working for white

man, Margaret Mead's ethnography represents life in New Guinea in 1920s as timeless cultures unaffected by the outside forces (Mead, 1930).

In his popular treatise, Ronald Inden argues how the colonial ethnography on India tends to represent India as a land of self contained and inward turned villages consisting of cooperative agents (Inden, 1990). He argues that the constitution of India as a land of inward looking villages is to talk about reconstitution of the state of India. According to Inden the politics of discourse on the construction of Indian villages is to displace a complex polity with an ancient India and appropriate it as an external member of modern Britain (Inden, 1990). Inden argues that these representations must be viewed as knowledge produced by 'other' through their dominance which undermines human agency (Inden, 1990). Such a conception of village society, in India and elsewhere, has recently been seriously questioned in post-colonial studies and critical anthropology.

Drawing on her ethnographic fieldwork among Hutu refugees who lived inside and outside of a refugee camp in Tanzania, Malkki explores the usual ways of thinking about identity and territory that are reflected in scholarly work and nationalist discourses. She argues that there is a tendency in the modern world to locate people and identities in particular spaces and with particular boundaries and thus view mobility in negative ways (Malkki, 1992). She discusses mobile/nomadic identities or nomadic metaphysics in opposition to sedentary metaphysics (Malkki, 1992). Cresswell talks about development of a place based 'sendenterist metaphysics' in cultural geography and the humanities in general in which places and roots are given priority over and above mobile states of existence and forms of identity (Cresswell, 2003). In a stimulating analysis of syphilis Cresswell shows how mobility was linked to the concept of morality (Cresswell, 2000). In the dominant representation, mobility is primarily viewed as absence of commitment or attachment and involvement (Spencer, 2004).

Until recently, it was standard practice among the anthropologists to consider community studies to be the primary locale through which the anthropologists

developed an in-depth understanding of the little community (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). Kearney calls the earlier approach 'parachute anthropology' to refer to how the anthropologist figuratively drop into a community from out of the sky and take that place as a bounded, self-contained unit of analysis, with little attention to how it is situated in regional, national or even global contexts, which more or less shapes its internal features (Kearney, 2004: 18). This internal focus on a community perfectly suits classical anthropology that emphasizes long term fieldwork in small communities and very little effort is made to match the wealth of detail on internal structure with the analyses of external linkages. With the isolated as the ideal unit of study, the impression of immobility is unintentionally promoted in the social science literature. Later, the massive flow of peasants into the cities led to an assumption among the anthropologists that migrants were progressive types who would have a modernising impact on their home communities. While the focus is on an individual migrant as a rational decision maker, the sphere of research continues to be a bounded, small community which is consistent with the promotion of community development by modernization theorists.

The similar process is seen in the discipline of development studies which has prompted different forms of interventions through various development programmes on the assumption that a community is bounded and so must be the unit of analysis, planning and interventions. Various economic development programmes with the help of 'developed countries', both at the national level and local level, programmes like 'community development programmes' and 'village development programmes', are thought to be the answer to underdeveloped societies. The approach views 'traditional' societies as underdeveloped and stable and prescribes different programmes like community development and different infrastructure programmes to move towards the modern. Dependency and world system theorists have responded radically to modernisation theory as new signs of polarization started appearing between the poor and rich nations (Roberts and Hite, 2000). Though these new approaches provide a fundamental critique of failure to understand the real causes of underdevelopment and poverty, they maintain the unit of analysis to be the nation state and much of their analyses based on a dualistic assumption of developed

and underdeveloped nation states. Migration of the rural population is viewed through the framework of exploitation of the periphery/satellite by the centre/metropolis (Kearney, 2004).

Fluid boundaries

In the 'global phase', empirical change in the world has led to pressure in anthropology and other social sciences. One particular implication of globalisation is to challenge existing social scientific methods of inquiry and units of analysis by destabilising the embededness of social relations in particular communities and places (Gille and Riain, 2002). This leaves space for the emergence of new kinds of places with new definitions of social relations and boundaries. This changing context and pressure has implications for social scientists. Presenting a critique of anthropology, Appadurai argues that the world has changed significantly but the discipline is yet to follow the changes (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). Urry argues that this 'disembeded social' is increasingly constituted by flows of people, information, goods, information, and particular signs. He further argues that the manifesto for 'sociology after societies' is that these mobilities replace the bounded community (Urry, 2000).

Inspired by the development of cultural theory, anthropologists and other social scientists are turning away from traditional concerns with people in places and from place based notions of the field. The issue of 'space and identity' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992) and the concept of 'production of local' (Appadurai, 1995) are somewhat similar and are of significance to the discussion here. Increasingly there is a consensus that place is not static and there is no clear boundary between inside (insider) and outside (outsider) and identity of a place is no longer homogenous. The idea of culture as a coherent whole, located and bounded, is effectively deconstructed by new forces of transnationalism and the flows of people and commodities which effectively deterritorialise identity (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992, Kearney, 2004).

The earlier sedentary approach is challenged in the era of globalisation where population mobility along with other forms of movement is seen as fundamental to people's lives. The recognition of mobility has an important impact on peasant lives where rural-urban culture and economy are connected (Kearney, 2004). In his analysis of contemporary global cultural flows, Arjun Appaduarai addresses the conjunction of electronic mediation and mass migration where, in many cases, both audiences and messages are often in simultaneous circulation (Appadurai, 1996, Appadurai, 1988). While many people are not migrants, it is true that many people either has relatives, acquaintances or colleagues who are on the road to somewhere else, or already coming back home, bearing stories and possibilities. While Appadurai accepts that migration itself is no recent development, he nonetheless argues that its conjunction with contemporary global flows of mass mediated imagery produces a new order of instability in the production of modern subjectivities (Appadurai, 1996).

Here it is useful to remember that while making an argument to discredit the idea of immobile peasantry it is not to be imagined that there were periods of high mobility throughout the history (Spencer, 2004). Instead I follow the argument that mobility has been central to human society, though certainly there were periods of less or more mobility in the history, which are affected by different factors (Appadurai, 1995, Gardner and Osella, 2004, Gupta and Ferguson, 1997, Skeldon, 1990).

Mobility and Methods

With the emergence of such a debate, more recent developments in anthropology and other social sciences have begun to rethink the very foundation, methodology and subject matter of the discipline. Clifford makes a connection between mobile epistemology and mobile ontology. He provides an interesting metaphor of 'routes' that he used as the title of his book to talk about how 'routes' and not 'roots' should be central to understanding human society. In the opening chapter of the book Clifford draws on the work of Amitabh Ghosh's writings of Egyptian society. He takes issue with the statement 'every man ....was a traveller' and argues that many

questions—empirical, historical, political and theoretical—emerges from the statement. With such a background he put forward a point that travelling rather than dwelling is an important site for study (Clifford, 1997).

On the methodological front, Marcus advocates 'multi-sited imaginary' if not multi-sited ethnography, which forces the ethnographers to move beyond a single locale (Marcus, 1998, Marcus, 1995). Marcus's paper 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography (1995)' is frequently cited on discussions on multi-sited ethnography. He presents five different techniques of study—Follow the People, Follow the Thing, Follow the Metaphor, Follow the Plot, Story or Allegory, Follow the Life or Biography and Follow the Conflict. The idea of a changing conception of the field is extensively discussed in the volume edited by Gupta and Ferguson. In the introduction of the volume they argue that anthropology appeared determine to give up its old idea of territorially fixed communities and stable, localized communities and to apprehend an interconnected world in which people, objects and ideas are rapidly shifting and refuse to stay in one place (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). They note that in this process the discipline has become more defensive in favour of fieldwork in a localized context. Drawing on her research among the British Gurkhas, who travelled to different parts of the world during their career, Des Chene writes how her own research would have benefited from a multi-sited and travelling anthropology to different destinations where Gurkhas have lived (Des Chene, 1995: 73-74).

These show that the idea of fluid boundaries and mobile epistemology are recently emerging in social sciences. In the recent years, it has become increasingly impossible for social science researchers to ignore the mobile and complex nature of social life and there are now new methodologies to capture this complexity.

The Context of social science research in Nepal

A review of academic research in Nepal shows that social science research is largely introduced and promoted by foreign scholars (Dahal, 1996, Mishra, 1984), though

there are a few native scholars[47] trained either by working as research assistants for foreign scholars and/or by studying in foreign universities. One of the major implications of this is in the availability of published or unpublished work which is either found as PhD theses in the libraries of the western universities or is not accessible to the native readers, as they are mostly written and published in English and they are relatively more expensive. Likewise, research studies carried out by French and German scholars are not always translated into English or Nepali. With the advantage of libraries in a western university with access to all the technology, I could confidently say that Nepali society is extensively researched, but an important issue remains regarding the access of scholarly knowledge to the wider community. An important issue is the availability of capable, resourceful and committed social science institutions within Nepal (Hachethu, 2002, Onta, 2006). Though, it is beyond the scope of my work to explore the production of social science knowledge in Nepal but this remains an important issue for further research.

While travellers, religious visitors and colonial officers have produced pioneering accounts of Nepal that formed the basis for professional social scientists, organized social science research in Nepal began with the opening of Nepal to the rest of the world after the fall of the Rana rulers in 1950.

The rulers of Nepal confined the movement of foreigners to the narrow Kathmandu valley, and only very few were allowed to visit within Kathmandu. As a direct result of this policy of isolation reliable anthropological information on the inhabitants of Nepal was virtually unobtainable (Furer-Haimendorf, 1974). As I indicated in Chapter II, the interest of foreign scholars on Nepal could be attributed to four major reasons: the easy access unlike other Himalayan regions (Berreman, 1978, Hachethu, 2002), the geopolitical location of Nepal, perception of underdevelopment and as

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[47] Onta (2005) has proposed a model, what he calls '*Churlumma Dubāune model'* (complete immersion model) for the training of young native social scientists from Nepal. The model proposes to provide close-contact training to young Nepali social scientists which is thought to be possible in an NGO setting. While I sympathise with Onta in his spirit, I do not agree on the argument for NGOisation of the production of social science in Nepal by ignoring the existing academic institutions like Tribhuwān University.

unexplored region, prompting anthropologists to go to the hills in search of exotic, primitive and peasant societies.

Following the colonial accounts produced by missionaries and British officers, the work of anthropologist Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf is considered to be the pioneering work in the field of modern social science in Nepal (Allen, 1994, Beine, 1998). As the celebrated modern social scientist of Nepal, Fürer-Haimendorf writes that it is important for the anthropologists to conduct detailed ethnographic accounts of different ethnic groups scattered throughout the different parts of Nepal (Furer-Haimendorf, 1974). This is followed by the production of a growing number of ethnographies of different ethnic groups, primarily in the hills (Furer-Haimendorf, 1974).[48]

The earlier attempts were focussed on developing a general account of different ethnic groups, which were guided by the theoretical perspective dominant in those times. The effect of such a production had been so great that anyone who considered anthropology in Nepal thought that it was the study of ethnic groups and traditional practices with a rich description of culture, daily life and so on (Justice, 1989: 135).

Another significant turn in the history of social science was the emerging importance of development that contributed to the production of Nepal as a 'developmentalist' state. Keeping the development metaphor in the centre, much of the social science research in the aftermath of 1950 began to focus on issues relating to poverty and development. Keeping crisis at the centre of research questions, the attempts were on understanding the causes of 'underdevelopment', population growth, environmental

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[48] In 1953/54, Fürer-Haimendorf conducted a study in eastern regions and later (in 1962/1966/1972) he conducted studies among the highlanders in western Nepal In 1953, a Japanese group under the direction of Jiro Kawakita undertook anthropological investigations among various communities of high altitude dwellers in central Nepal and in 1958 Kawakita, R. Takayama and Shigeru Iijima visited Dolpa and subsequently produced the first detailed ethnographic account of the pastoral economy of that region. A team of French Anthropologists like Bernard Pidnede, Corneille Jest, Marc Gaborieau, Alain Fournie along with A. W. Macdonald undertook several ethnographic projects in different parts of Nepal from 1958. During 1965-67 a team of German researchers led by Professor Freidrich Funke studied Sherpās of Solu and Likhu Khola; Andras Hofer and WD Michl carried out a research project among Tamangs and Chantels. Among Americans anthropologists include John Hitchcock, Charles Macdougal, James Fisher, Rex Jones, Sherry Ortner, Joe Reinhard, Don Messerschmidt and Barry Bishop

degradation and poverty (Blaikie et al., 2002, Blaikie et al., 1980, Blaikie et al., 1979, Eckholm, 1976, Ives and Messerli, 1989, Macfarlane, 2001, Macfarlane, 1976).

In the post 1990 era, while development continues to be a priority, there is a shift in the social science research towards nationalism, state and ethnicity. Following the Maoists movement and the complicated political topography, it is impossible to ignore the state and the changing political economy (Fisher, 1993, Geller, 2004, Gellner et al., 1997, Lecomte-Tilouine and Dollfus, 2003). With the state, ethnic identity and politics entering the public debate, there are emerging discourses on politics of representation along the ethnic lines.

Looking back at the history of social science research in Nepal, we can see that the rural hill population is extensively researched in Nepal, with specific focus on different aspects of their lives. As I shall argue, some of these scholarly works have produced influential public, academic and policy discourses on Nepali hill society while others have remained marginal. With this background, let me now turn to the schema by which the selected scholarly works on the rural hills view hill population in Nepal.

How immobile?

One of the significant scholarly representations of hill society in Nepal is along the lines of a traditional, closed, bounded, immobile and agrarian society. It is through such a sedentary image that scholarly work in Nepal is carried out.

A reading of early accounts of Nepal, produced by western travellers, missionaries and British officers, shows a colonial tendency to represent Nepal as an exotic, traditional and unexplored region. The first account of the region is produced by an Italian missionary named G. Tucci but it is the writing of Colonel Kirkpatrik, a British officer serving in British India, charged with the first western diplomatic mission into Nepal, which has a wider readership through publication. His work is

the first among only a handful of early sources which has provided background information on the nature and interest of anthropologists and others (Allen, 1994). Kirkpatrik's book is titled 'An Account of the Kingdom of Nepaul Being the Substance of Observations Made during A Mission to That Country, in the Year 1793 (1811)'. His view is affected by the colonial logic and ethnocentric view of the discrete 'indigenous people' held by the leading anthropologists of those days (Beine, 1998). Another frequently cited study is Hodgson's 'Essays on Nepal and Tibet (1874)', a collection of articles written between 1828 and 1838. In his 20 years (1820-1843) stay in Nepal, Hodgson produced in-depth accounts of various ethnic groups. According to Beine his accounts demonstrates an open colonial agenda, 'describing the commercial systems of Nepal in one essay (Hodgson 1874:92-122) and openly advocating European colonisation in another (Hodgson 1974:83)'(Beine, 1998). Smadja reviews a few written reports of British officers who visited Palpa that represents the exotic picture of Palpa's landscape and the people (Smadja, 1999: 15). The earlier writings on Nepal are based on colonial logic which formed the basis for the later generation of anthropology on Nepal. For the colonial writings, they tend to represent Nepal as a closed and exotic society, mostly agrarian and a traditional people to be developed through a civilising mission.

Modern ethnography has a detailed account of a particular ethnic group as unexplored and a closed society (Furer-Haimendorf, 1975, Furer-Haimendorf, 1964, Hitchcock, 1966, Macfarlane, 1976). These include obtaining detailed information of different ethnic groups. The work in this era is mainly confined to a particular community, with very little interest in the outside world.

The idea of Nepal as a peasant society dependent on agriculture (Blaikie et al., 2002, Blaikie et al., 1980, Blaikie et al., 1979, Macfarlane, 2001, Macfarlane, 1976, Shrestha, 1990, Shrestha, 1989) and natural resources (Conway et al., 2000, Eckholm, 1976, Ives and Messerli, 1989) is particularly visible in several influential works. These studies are based on the theoretical model that hill populations are dependent on agriculture and natural resources, which inform their analytical categories. The consensus that emerges from these studies is that the hill society is

less mobile and it is based on agriculture and natural resources. I will discuss these works in detail in the next section.

Among most of the earlier anthropologists, one of the dominant perspectives to look at a hill society is on dualism in religion: Buddhism and Hinduism. Analyzing the scholarly discourses on religion of the Thakalis, Fisher argues that the earlier scholars have made an attempt to understand Thakalis based on the model that Hinduism and Buddhism were distinct, and Hinduism was a recent phenomenon among the Thakalis (Fisher, 2001). The underlying element in such a representation is the immobility and closed society, with recent contact with people from outside.

The picture that emerges from the literature is not monolithic i.e. existing literature do note human mobility of different forms but these are often dismissed or treated as less significant variables. A few work reflect the mobile life among the highlanders (Furer-Haimendorf, 1975, Furer-Haimendorf, 1964). Earlier anthropologists noted that during winter a few ethnic groups migrated to the south to the warmer areas of the district along with their families and livestock. From this new temporary home, they traded with various parts of Nepal for the whole winter season. In the summer, they went back to their permanent home again and traded in the north with the bordering towns of Tibet such as Taklakot. Several studies look at men's mobility for work to India as a livelihoods strategy in the hills of Nepal (Hitchcock, 1961, Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1995, Thieme and Wyss, 2005, Thieme and Müller-Böker, 2004). The practice of recruitment to a foreign army among certain hill ethnic groups, like Magars and Gurungs, has received some scholarly attention as a defining feature of people's livelihoods and identity (Adhikari, 1993, Des Chene, 1991). Almost all the scholars working in the hills of Nepal have data on human mobility but most of them seem to treat it as a peripheral variable within the ideal of the bounded unit of a village community.

Human mobility has played a central role in making Nepali society. Nepal is a country where movement is difficult, yet surprisingly, the constant movement of people throughout the Himalaya seems a common feature of the history of the area.

One of the most important questions then is why the idea of immobility remains an accepted fact.

Mobility: a problem?

As discussed above, the idea of 'sedentary peasants' has led to an understanding that mobility is aberrant, and a threat to the hill economy, society and culture. It is viewed as an exception and often a crisis, leading to some other crisis. A reading of scholarly work shows that often *a priori* mobility is treated as a problem, irrespective of the extent to which mobility is experienced as a problem by the people themselves.

In his ethnographic account of a Gurung village, north of Pokhara, Macfarlane describes a temporary migration pattern, with many men from the village leaving for army service in the British and Indian armies (Macfarlane, 2001). In his account, these soldiers return with their pay and pensions and the profits from army service are invested in the village. His study shows that over a third of the total income in the village come from army pay, pensions and civilian work abroad, and this constituted almost all the cash that is available to villagers. In a recent account Macfarlane, reflecting on 30 years of change in the same Gurung village, points out that migration is possibly a major driving force to understand changes occurring in the studied village (Macfarlane, 2001). The importance of remittance, as described in his original study, has declined to a thin trickle from the few labourers abroad, who save a little and sent it home. The re-visit shows that there is a change to the nature of migration. From the middle of the 1970s, when army recruitment dried up, people went first to India and later to East and south-east Asia, the Middle East, and a few to Europe and America. When they and the remaining army service men retired, they no longer came back to the village but settled in the town, in particular in nearby Pokhara. Further, he argues that the beneficial effect of this out-migration has been to prevent ecological collapse but it has meant that people left behind are bearing the burden of out-migration, visible in material impoverishment (Macfarlane 2001). Providing a critique of his work Campbell raises the question: Why did

people not consume the resources rather moved elsewhere? The 'revised village history' is criticized for treating individuals as passive people who responded to changes as an overpowering fact of life. 'There seems to be a lack of fit between this component of reflexive engagement with change, and the general undertow of the income-seeking migratory imperative' (Campbell, 2001: 111).

Based on their earlier research work in western central Nepal in 70s, including Palpa, Blaikie and others predict a crisis in Nepal and argue that the development of capitalism in Nepal is effectively precluded by Nepal's relationship with India, its own class structures and the nature of the Nepali state (Blaikie et al., 1980). Labour migration from the hills of Nepal to India is identified as one of the leading causes of dependency and underdevelopment. These researchers went back to conduct a re-study after 20 years where they conclude by saying 'the most important empirical conclusion about social change in rural western Nepal over 20 years is the degree of its continuity' (Blaikie et al., 2002: 1267). The re-study makes a comparison of class structure over the 20 years and shows that there has been very little change in the rural class structure. 'The 'dependency' had contributed to sustainable rural life more than the original study emphasized, but nonetheless it created a backwater dependent on labour migration and employment away from home, with associated personal, social and economic tensions to which this gave rise' (Blaikie et al., 2002: 1265). It is interesting to read this construction where Blaikie and others first acknowledge the importance of out-migration for preventing crisis declared two decades earlier, but they quickly dismiss this importance by highlighting the potential social and economic tension out-migration might give. However, they do not provide empirical evidence to support this new crisis as a result of out-migration, which lefts room for criticism. Their argument is constrained by their theoretical framework that gives little voice to the people who they studied.

One of the most powerful discourses on the crisis is promoted by the work of Eckholm (1976), which is popularly known as the Theory of Himalayan Environment Degradation (Guthman, 1997). In what appeared as a journalistic account, a chapter titled 'Refugees From Shangri-La: Deteriorating Mountain

Environments' discusses the relationship between environmental degradation in the Himalayas with the crisis of hill-*terāi* out-migration leading to another crisis in the *terāi*. Using the frame of reference that the Nepali hill population is completely dependent and destroying the Himalayan environment, the logic in the work of Eckholm is that people must be governed by teaching them to manage the environment and by making attempts to control the hill population through various control measures. This assumes that the hill population is sedentary and they must remain sedentary. Guthman argues that much of the work like Blaikie and others are inspired by the Theory of Environment Degradation though some aspects of the theory is revisited in the subsequent publications (Guthman, 1997). Though Ives and Messerli provide a critique of the Theory in terms of its claim and spirit, their study is based on the similar assumption that the hill population is sedentary and mobility is a problem due to pressure in the hill environment and agriculture (Ives and Messerli, 1989). Although the nature of such a crisis has now been contested, this theory continues to make significant impact in the aid based interventions (Guthman, 1997). While the claims seem humanist in their own way, how far this held true for the people themselves cannot be said, based on the information that they gathered. What is obvious here is that the commitment to theoretical model seems to have ignored human agency in these discussions.

Writing from the neo-Marxist position, Shrestha argues that the Nepali state has failed to provide economic security to its people thus forcing them to emigrate, which in turn is a loss to Nepal's economy (Shrestha, 1990). He writes, 'Nepali peasants are not only faced with the situation of growing impoverishment, but also chased by the fear of being condemned to permanent degradation- both socially and economically' (Shrestha, 1998: 10). Regmi provides historical evidence that the land policies forced peasants to move out of their land and seek their livelihoods elsewhere (Regmi, 1971). Under the policies of land ownership the taxation system and unpaid labour, the peasants were forced to share a large proportion of their production with the elite who had no role in production (Regmi, 1978). Pressure on land is a principal cause of emigration of Nepalis to Sikkim as early as 1890s. Caplan cited O'Malley (1907: 43) 'by 1981 over half the population in Darjeeling was of

Nepali origin and one third had been born in Nepal' (Caplan, 1990: 6). Writing about land and social change among high caste Bahun and Limbus in the eastern hills, Caplan adds:

> Those who have left their homes in east Nepal do not fall within the scope of this study. But, no examination of social life in this part of the country can ignore the ever present possibility of having to emigrate. It is this threat, which provides edge to the struggle for land (Caplan, 1990: 7).

Though this statement shows that while emigration (mobility) is an ever-present and significant phenomenon, the use of the word 'threat' is particularly significant. In the same study, he argues that it is the remittance from the Gurkha Army that is helping Limbus to regain the land and uplift their status and power in the community, thus altering their exploitative relationship with the Bahuns. Thus, it is not useful to see the village population as passive victims of state policies.

From the perspective of women, Des Chene sees that recruitment to a foreign army (*lāhur jāne*) has implications for the safety of men and the absence of labour leading to both physical and emotional strain (Des Chene, 1991). In the face of economic necessity women seem to weigh such strain against the benefits. The issue of loss gets reflected in the work of Shrestha and Conway, who have written an article titled *Shadow Life of Migrant's Wives* (Shrestha and Conway, 2001). Despite the powerful title, the content of the paper do not seem to reflect the spirit of the title because the article lacks ethnographic description to demonstrate the 'shadow life'. The similar story of the wives left behind runs in a frequently quoted article that appeared in 'Himal South Asia', where the difficult life of a migrant's wife Sancha Maya is discussed (Aryal, 1991). The suffering caused by migration in spilt-households is documented by Yamanaka in her study of Nepali migrants in Japan (Yamanaka, 2005).

In her analysis of failure of rural health care delivery system in Nepal, Justice documents the contradiction between the job of female nurses that requires them to move away from home and the culture that questions and restricts the mobility of unmarried women (Justice, 1989). The NGO discourses on the trafficking of women from Nepal demonstrate the moral outcry resulting from the work done by women

migrants. O'Neil analyses the impact of such discourses on the mobility of Tamanag women whose livelihoods is dependent on migration for work (O'Neill, 2001). In the recent years, there has been a significant shift in the discourses towards recognizing the importance of remittances for household livelihoods (Hausner, 2005, Seddon, 1998).

However, I discussed that there are a few studies that consider the positive impact of mobility beyond its representation as a problem. For instance, the following statement written by an anthropologist is interesting:

> Migrants are farmers and of course, members of rural households and of rural communities, but as 'migrants' they are absent from a given local rural context. They have become a part of urban labour force. Hence, from the perspective of outside observers, it is difficult to think of them as constituent agents of 'rural development. Still the temporary absence of the migrants from the local economies and from the local socio-political contexts, and their continuous movement between home and 'outside', is a crucial factor affecting contemporary life within marginal rural areas (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1995: 97)

Methodological issues

My review shows that almost all the social scientists working in the hills of Nepal have data on mobility in their scholarly work but there is a methodological issue in existing research on mobility in Nepal. The scholarly accounts largely view mobility as peripheral variable and/or within economic framework with little insight into its socio-cultural dimensions. There remains a significant gap in our knowledge on several aspects of mobility, particularly from the people's perspective allowing for its socio-cultural meanings and significance.

Quantitative bias

Existing scholarly work have produced some useful macro level data on the estimation of the number of migrant workers and remittances (Regmi and Tisdell, 2002, Seddon et al., 2002) but they rarely take account of how people understand mobility. It is limited to counting numbers and appropriating human mobility in terms of exiting models, typologies and categories.

It is estimated that as many as 2 million out of 27 million Nepalis live outside of Nepal contributing significantly to people's livelihoods and poverty reduction in Nepal (CBS, 2002, Seddon et al., 2001). Nepali economy earned over USD 1.5 billion in remittances in 2004/05 that accounted for 12.4 percent of national GDP (Singh, 2006). Likewise, internal migration has resulted in considerable population redistribution within Nepal (Gurung, 1998). Though statistics on internal migration is available since 1961 but they are not comparable because of changes in number and sizes of defined migration units. Furthermore, the issue of spatial boundaries that are often administrative units and temporal unit remain problematic in any statistics relating to internal migration. Data on remittances from internal migration is not available and it has not been a subject of academic discussion.

With the lack of reliable and consistent data on Indo-Nepal migration , and 'too much talk and not enough dedicated research on the subject, there is enough reason to treat with caution any number that is preferred as to the population of migrant labour on either side of the border' (Dahal, 1997: 26). Writing in 'Himal South Asia' in 1997, Dahal raises serious questions about the exaggeration in the numbers of Nepalis in India; he writes:

> The Nepali migrant labour pool in India is made up overwhelmingly of economically active males. When it is claimed that there are three million Nepali migrant workers in India, we are saying that more than 64 percent of Nepalis 15-59 years age group population are working in India. This is impossible. Even a figure of one million Nepali migrant workers in India seems high, considering that migration is age—and sex-selective it is mostly male of 20-45 who leave home for seasonal work.
>
> Another reason for scepticism is that there are many hill and Tarai districts of Nepal which do not send males to India as seasonal workers. This decreases the migrant pool even further. It also has to be kept in mind that the 1991 Nepali census reported a total of only 658,290 people absent from the country for more than 6 months. Fully 90 percent of this population went to India, and 83.2 percent were males.
>
> To reach their conclusions, some researchers have relied on figures supplied by Nepali organisations in India (Dahal, 1997: 26).

The 2001 Nepali census records that there were 589,050 Nepali emigrants to India (CBS, 2002). Recently some scholars working in the field of foreign labour

migration and remittances argue that the official statistics underestimated the actual number of people who moved out of Nepal into India, and they estimate that the number of Nepalis working in India ranges from 0.5 to 1.3 million (Seddon et al., 2002). The movement of people across the country is largely not documented due to the open border, which is officially recognized in the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Indian and Nepal (Pandey, 1999). Since the beginning of 1990's there has been growing NGO discourses on trafficking of an increasing number of women and children from Nepal to Indian cities like Mumbai (Hausner, 2005, Joshi, 2001, Pigg, 2002). The NGOs estimate that there are more than 150,000 girl children and women working in brothels in India. Likewise, since the beginning of the new millennium, there has been a growing policy discourses on insurgency and counter-insurgency leading to displacement of Nepalis into India. However, there is very little empirical or ethnographic evidence available on migration from either side of the border.

Categories

Scholars working on migration in Nepal, mainly demographers and geographers, have collected statistical data on some form of pre-determined categories of human mobility drawing analysis on flow, trend and pattern. The review shows that some forms of mobility like foreign labour migration (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1995, Seddon et al., 2001, Thieme and Müller-Böker, 2004, Yamanaka, 2000) or hill-*terāi* migration (Ojha, 1983, Shrestha, 1990, Shrestha, 1989) are considered more significant than other forms of mobility thus receiving much more attention than others. I got an impression that the scholars have preferred to select a particular form of mobility and study it without looking at other forms of mobility, considering them unimportant.

Too often, the statistics on Nepali migrants in India is complicated by the failure to distinguish between different types of migrants. Historically there has long been a trend of migration along the Himalayas from west to east (Whelpton, 2005). In the nineteenth century many Nepalis settled in the hills of West Bengal and beyond (Caplan, 1990, Hutt, 1997, Russell, 2000).

The very category of Nepali migrants in India needs to be analyzed though they are linked to each other. *First*, there are Nepalis who have settled in India who speak Nepali, hold Indian citizenship and consider themselves Indian Nepalis (Hutt, 1997, Subba and Sinha, 2003). *Second*, there are Nepalis who have come to India in search of work opportunities who consider themselves Nepali by origin and Nepali by citizenship (Hausner, 2005, Thieme, 2006). The second category of Nepalis in India could be further divided into different parts: those who have been coming here for a long time and those who have recently arrived. Some of them are single individuals while others have a family.

As discussed in Chapter I, the existing studies human mobility is either characterized by the length of time involved (seasonal, cyclical, permanent, temporary) or in terms of distance (internal, international) or in terms of direction (rural-urban, urban-rural, rural-rural) and so on. Other scholars look at migrants intentions, such as whether they intended to return or not; others interpret action in terms of whether they sold land or property. The choice often reflects the existing categories of the analysts. A 1971 study done by the Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA) categorizes migration into four different types: seasonal migration; traditional settlers, former settlers, and permanent settlers (Dahal et al., 1997). From the discussion, the difference between traditional and permanent settlers is based on a random time period and is not very clear. Another CEDA study in 1973 categorizes migration as seasonal, recurrent and permanent (Dahal et al., 1997). This category completely ignores the intra-hill movement. Another study bases their typology on economic resource in the village of emigration i.e. land. This study distinguishes between migrants and non-migrants; further, migrants are distinguished between reversible and non-reversible migrants (Dahal et al., 1997).

Economic framework

A few influential studies on social change in rural Nepal indicate the importance of mobility in the livelihoods of the people and in the social change at large (Blaikie et al., 2002, Macfarlane, 2001, Shrestha, 1990). However, it is mainly viewed as a dependent variable in the larger equation involving economic imbalances between

different regions and class with very little attention paid to the socio-cultural dimension of such movement. A few scholars working on Nepali migrant workers in India attempt to give more human agency in their analysis of migration (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1995, Thieme and Wyss, 2005, Thieme and Müller-Böker, 2004). Adhikari makes attempt to present a more grounded understanding (Adhikari, 2001). He sees labour migration as a form of significant mobility, and categorizes other forms of mobility based on the work of the temporary out-migrants: civil service within Nepal, other work in Nepal, service in the Indian or British Army and manual or factory work in India. He develops another category called seasonal off-farm work to talk about those who moved to earn money on a seasonal basis.

Socio-cultural perspectives

Though a few scholars have studied mobility from the livelihoods perspective, providing useful insights into how people make decisions about movement and considered social, economic and cultural factors that shapes their movement (Adhikari, 2001, Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1995, Thieme, 2006), it is largely understood within the economic framework with little insight into its socio-cultural dimension. At the same time, some forms of mobility like pilgrimage, marriage, runaway children or refugees are excluded from the migration literature.

A few scholarly work provide some useful insights into the meaning of some forms of human mobility in studying ethnic identity (Adhikari, 1993, Daryn, 2003, Des Chene, 1991, Fisher, 2001, Russell, 2000). Des Chene and Adhikari provide insights into the cultural meaning and significance of a particular practice of recruitment in foreign army in the lives among Gurungs and Magars in western Nepal. Drawing on the concept of 'routes' (Clifford, 1997) in his study of Yakhas, Russell argues that a study of ethnic identity must also take into account those who have moved out (Russell, 2000). Fisher looks at the implication of migration among Thakalis who now live in different places, both within and outside of Nepal, for their ethnic identity (Fisher, 2001). More recently Daryn followed young Bahuns from a village in Central Nepal who migrated to Kathmandu in search of work, which he argues, provides a new possibility for the development of ethnic identity among high caste

Bahuns (Daryn, 2003). Hutt explores the emergence of Nepali diaspora identity in India. He discusses both internal (ethnicity, language and culture) and external factors (hardship and discrimination) that have played an important role in Nepali identity in India (Hutt, 1997). Subba looks at the issue of ethnic identity and pressure among Nepali migrants primarily in North-East India (Subba and Sinha, 2003).

These indicate that while a few work discussed above provide important insights into the socio-cultural dimension of mobility, there is much to explore in the studies of different forms of mobility from the socio-cultural dimension, based on how people themselves experience and perceive it. A study of mobility from socio-cultural dimension provides an opportunity to explore issues relating to gender identity and household livelihoods. While the existing scholarship has produced some useful data on different forms of human mobility in/from Nepal, they are treated separately without considering the fluid boundary between different forms of mobility. For instance, there exist separate bodies of knowledge on hill-*terāi* migration, international labour migration, displacement, trafficking, pilgrimage, child labour or runaway children.

A brief review of scholarly encounters with the hill population in relation to mobility illustrates the various ways in which they rate more values to some evidence, apply interpretive structures, imagine the past and project the future.

Conclusion

As we saw in the paragraphs above, while significant differences exist, a set of scholarly construction is dominant in the production of a different sort of socio-political conception of hill society in Nepal. What is particularly striking is the absence of mobility in the social analysis of the societies where it seems to be a major feature in the people's livelihoods. Furthermore, the dominant tendency is to dismiss the significance of mobility in the lives of people by treating it as an exception or as a problem. While a few studies indicate that mobility is a central element in people's livelihoods, such constructions remain marginal in the face of

influential scholarship that either undermine or represent it as a problem. The review of studies shows that the sedentary and immobile conception of the rural population in Nepal remains problematic and paradoxical given the ethnographic and historical evidence which shows that mobility is an important part of life among the hill population in rural Nepal.

As I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, these work have made a strong impact on policy making and shaped the public knowledge of rural hill communities in relation to mobility in Nepal and the Himalayan region. These narratives help to produce new forms of conception and socio-political engagements in Nepal and facilitate international development aid for agricultural development, environmental protection, population control and various humanitarian efforts, without taking people's perspective into account.

Though my thesis is focussed on contemporary Nepal, I argue that the conventional ideas of an immobile, sedentary peasantry are in need of review. Given the historical and ethnographic evidence, mobility cannot be underestimated as a defining feature of the rural population differentiated along ethnic, class and gender lines. I conclude this chapter with an argument that influential scholarship dealing with the population in the hills of Nepal has failed to consider the centrality of mobility that has important socio-cultural, political and economic dimensions.

Chapter IV

Pathologizing Mobility: an ethnography of rural development discourses in Nepal

Given the important role of development in configuring the life and livelihoods of people in Nepal and elsewhere, next I discuss the schema through which development discourses view the rural population in the Nepal hills, particularly in relation to their mobility and livelihoods. My reading of the development institutions, their programmes and policies, shows that there is a strong tendency among policy makers to view mobility as aberrant in their discourses—discourses that are 'authoritative'. However, such discourses can be understood as social products created and sustained through social activity. Following such a perspective this chapter examines how mobility is constructed as a problem in policy debates and how policy responses are engendered by these constructions. Adopting the insights offered by the concept of 'governmentality', this chapter focuses on the problematic representation of human mobility in the hills of Nepal in the field of rural development.

As discussed in Chapter I, the concept of governmentality provides a way forward by offering a fresh perspective to treat development as a configuration of ideas and thoughts that produce certain effects (Ferguson, 1994, Mosse, 2005a, Mosse, 2005b, Pigg, 1996, Pigg, 1992). For the purpose of this chapter, the strength of the concept of governmentality lies in the fact that it views development not just as ideology but as a political project that endeavours to produce a social reality. With such insights, Ferguson provides us with a fresh perspective to turn the focus onto development as a strange subject, an anti-politics machine that he suggests depoliticizes poverty and poor people by treating them as technical subjects (Ferguson, 1994: 256). The insight offered by the concept of governmentality is useful to demonstrate a particular

rationale for representing human mobility as a problem that seems to promote or restrict what we are able to imagine as historical and socio-cultural realities of Nepal. Such representation engenders a particular policy response with a pathologizing effect on population mobility and a mobile population.

In the next section, I draw on data collected from several influential international development and humanitarian agencies working in Nepal, often by interacting with their staff and consultants, reading their rapid assessments and programme documents, and browsing their web-pages (both national and international). Since it is impossible to include all the international development agencies working in the field of rural development in Nepal in this chapter, I focus on a limited number of influential agencies and dominant policies to grasp a general mode of governmentality. The policy and programme documents were obtained by requesting them directly from these agencies and/or using libraries or their home pages. In addition, I carried out both formal (7) and informal (14) interviews with advisors, programme managers and consultants working in different agencies implementing these policies at different levels to understand the discourses beyond the face value of the policy documents.

Mobility and rural development

Rural development programmes in Nepal were organized around conceptualizing Nepal as a peasant society dependent on agriculture and natural resources without taking seriously the ubiquitous presence, normalcy and importance of mobility. Any report on different aspects of Nepal's development, both at the local or national level, started with a paragraph on the centrality of agriculture and natural resources in the life and livelihoods of the Nepalis. As I shall show below, we were told again and again that agriculture was the most important source of livelihoods for 80-90 per cent of Nepalis. While policies were framed differently under different development regimes by different agencies, there was a uniform voice coming from policy documents that agriculture was the most important livelihoods option available to Nepalis, and that it must be the central element in any strategy for economic

development in Nepal. While there was no disagreement on agriculture as one of the central elements in the livelihoods of Nepalis, it was surprising to see that even those who did not own land and/or did not derive their sustenance from farming were automatically categorized as farmers (WB, 1998). Furthermore, the hill society continued to be imagined as an immobile society dependent on agriculture, which appeared partial and inconsistent when compared with historical and ethnographic evidence. At the same time, there were powerful policy and institutional discourses around the crisis of the Himalayan environment and how it impacted on the lives and livelihoods of not just those living in the highlands but also those living in the plains of South Asia (Eckholm, 1976).

My purpose here is to provide a critique of these dominant claims by unveiling the pathological understanding of mobility that is produced through conceptualising Nepal as dependent on agriculture and natural resources. In this critique it is possible to draw a parallel with Ferguson's devastating critique of rural development discourse on Lesotho (Ferguson, 1994). He provides a discursive analysis of the World Bank's country report that constructs Lesotho as an agrarian society, simultaneously undermining the presence and importance of labour migration, which facilitates a particular policy response in the field of rural development.

Agrarian society

The pioneering effort in constructing Nepal as an agrarian society began with a technical agreement that was signed between the government of Nepal and the USOM (US Operations Mission) on 23rd January 1951. Since then, agriculture remained one of the most important sectors in the field of international aid and development policies in Nepal. The first team of USOM was heavily weighted toward agricultural expertise, with five agriculturalists in addition to a Chief Agriculturist, who soon became the Mission's first director (Skerry et al., 1991: 25). There were pioneering attempts to survey Nepal's agricultural potential, including programmes for research and demonstration, training of agricultural specialists and village development workers, and assisting agricultural extension activities. Initially

a Village Development Programme, introduced in 1952, was used as a vehicle for the extension of new (agricultural) crops and varieties and improved cultivation methods. By the 1960s the worldwide influence of the green revolution was making its impact in Nepal too, which saw attempts to encourage the modernisation of Nepali agriculture. The assumption that lack of cheap credit was a major reason why people were unable to engage themselves in modern agriculture lay behind the beginning of programmes to provide credits to farmers in the 1960s. Towards the end of 1960s and the beginning of 1970s there was a massive focus on cereal grain campaigns with an objective of increasing yields by 12 percent from 1966 to 1970 (Skerry et al., 1991). By 1970's there was growing assistance from several donors including Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) among others. At the same time, there were massive attempts at producing new kinds of agriculturalists and agricultural research and training institutions with the support of international aid. A more focussed approach to train agriculturalists in Nepal was initiated with the opening of the Institute of Agricultural and Animal Sciences in 1973. During the fifth and sixth five year plans, particular attention was paid to agricultural development to meet the basic needs. Despite many attempts to revolutionize Nepali agriculture to meet basic needs, the efforts did not meet with success, particularly because of its diverse agro-climatic zones, limits to irrigation, and lack of inputs and credit (Guthman, 1997).

A report released by the World Bank in 1989 stated:

> Because 90% of Nepal's population live in rural areas, the key to alleviating poverty lies in improving agricultural performance. The reasons for the poor agricultural growth reflect numerous problems in the agricultural system, many of which have proven thus far to be intractable. These include the inadequate transport infrastructure; a large number of poorly-fed livestock with low productivity; an inadequate and declining forage base; declining soil fertility due to environmental degradation, particularly in the Hills; and adverse and erratic weather. Nepal has not followed inappropriate producer pricing and trade policies and therefore these cannot be blamed for agriculture's poor performance. The major constraint to agricultural growth has been ineffective irrigation delivery, particularly in public irrigation schemes where only a small part of the command area actually receives reliable delivery. Other factors that have contributed to low growth and productivity include problems in the delivery of fertilizer, slow progress in

> developing yield-increasing technologies, and weak research and extension (WB, 1989: xiii)

This report systematically constructed the importance of agriculture in the livelihoods of Nepalis, looked at its failure and systematically paved the road for its development by modernizing the agricultural sector.

Following the IMF (International Monetary Fund) imposed structural adjustment package in the mid 1980s (Rankin, 2004), the shift towards market was visible in the agricultural policies and programmes in the 1990s. Perhaps the 20 year Agriculture Perspective Plan (APP), which was produced by Agricultural Projects Service Centre in 1995 with the support of ADB, best demonstrated the dominance of agriculture in development policy in Nepal. Prepared by John Mellor, a popular consultant within the development sector, the plan was based on the assumption that the modernisation of agriculture was key to Nepal's development and could be advanced by a combination of technological change and infrastructural development (Cameron, 1998). The assumption found in the APP was that much of the migration from the countryside to cities like Kathmandu was a result of the lack of income generation opportunities, plus a skewed distribution of that income in the hills and mountains. APP assumed that it was rational for rural people to base their livelihoods on agriculture and implied that if they could not get income from agriculture they had to migrate. There was a clear emphasis on the need for farmers to shift from subsistence agriculture to the market oriented agriculture. Therefore, the focus on small farm commercialisation was presented as central to poverty alleviation strategy. At the same time, there was a proposal to abolish subsidies for inputs like irrigation and fertilizer by promoting private sector involvement. This was assumed to lead to high quality goods for the farmers and reduce government expenses (APROSC, 1995, Cameron, 1998). The implementation of APP was to be facilitated with a number of large scale infrastructural projects—roads, irrigation, rural electrification etc—and local level programmes like micro-finance schemes.

As we shall see the APP was quite powerful in shaping policy drives as it was endorsed by the World Bank, ADB, DFID, and FAO, as well as other donors and

international development organisations. DFID advisors, based in Kathmandu, informally discussed with me how DFID's policies were focussed on improved opportunities for rural livelihoods and enterprise development through effective implementation of the APP. Since the APP came into effect, one of the major focuses of DFID was to reduce institutional, technical and social blockages in agriculture, in collaboration with the ADB and the World Bank. Focussing most of its attention towards rural livelihoods, apart from the issues of governance and peace building, the annual report of DFID (2005) showed its long-lasting commitment to agriculture. It stated 'the agricultural sector is the largest contributor to Nepal's economy. Eighty one percent of Nepal's households say that agriculture is their main livelihoods and most practise subsistence agriculture' (DFID, 2005: 26). The report indicated that DFID remained a strong supporter of the APP.

Similar commitment was found in the much cited report produced by the World Bank in 1998, titled 'Poverty in Nepal at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century'. The background of the report was NLSS (Nepal Living Standard Survey), completed in 1996 with the support of the World Bank.[49] This report discussed aspects of Nepali poverty and the centrality of agriculture as one of the major characteristics of Nepal. It stated:

> Landlocked and land-poor, Nepal must make the most of its very limited resources of arable soil if the large share of the population, and of the poor, who depend on it are ever to taste well-being. Agriculture employs 83 percent of the country's work force; eight out of ten of them as self-employed farmers....Nationwide, the importance of agriculture is unquestionable (WB, 1998: 2)

This report constructed Nepali agriculture as a problematic traditional system by highlighting its lack of irrigation, the inability of poor farmers to access fertilizer subsidy and poor credit facilities.

Not surprisingly this 'authoritative' insistence continued to shape the frame of reference of the policy makers. A report prepared by the ADB (2002), entitled 'Poverty Reduction in Nepal: Issues, Findings and Approaches' formed an integral

[49] I discuss NLSS later in this chapter

part of the Asian Development Bank's continuing efforts to focus on poverty in Nepal, stressed the centrality of agriculture in Nepal's development and accordingly devised a plan of action (ADB, 2002). The following quote taken from a key programme document, titled 'Agriculture Sector Programme of USAID' provided similar representation:

> Agriculture is Nepal's economic mainstay, with more than 80% of Nepalis dependent on farming and forest products for their livelihoods. As population pressures grow, an increasing number of families struggle to produce sufficient food on smaller and more marginal land holdings. The decrease in agricultural production combined with limited income-generation opportunities has depressed rural economies (USAID, 2006: 1).[50]

Realising the limitations of only reading these policy documents, I made several (both successful and unsuccessful) attempts to talk to policy makers (advisors, consultants and programme managers) in the influential development agencies in Kathmandu. Through my previous contact, I managed to make an appointment with two advisors working in the field of rural development at USAID. Before I went to the interview I had read the programmes of USAID in Nepal through their homepage[51], and in addition I had read the history of USAID in Nepal which had clearly demonstrated USAID's five decade long commitment to agriculture as a vehicle for rural development (Skerry et al., 1991). With reference to USAID's programme components, I asked the advisors if they could explain why there had been a focus on agriculture. Perhaps the advisors did not expect me to ask such a question; they looked at each other and looked at me, doubting if I was really asking such a 'simple lay question'. After a short pause, one of them replied that it was obvious for USAID to focus on agriculture as it was the central element of any development strategy in Nepal, whether USAID or not. Another advisor told me that though the contribution of agriculture in GDP was decreasing, agriculture still played an important part in the livelihoods of Nepali people. He told me that this was the basic sector in the field of rural development and it was impossible to carry out rural development in Nepal without focussing on this sector. (Interview, 26 August 2004)

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[50] This document is available online at www.usaid.gov/np/pdf/Agriculture.pdf (accessed on 10 August 2005).

[51] www.usaid.gov/np

At the local level in Palpa, agriculture (*krisi*) again dominated development discourses in the district. There were donors including ADB, Helvetas (a Swiss NGO), GTZ and FAO among others, whose programmes focussed on agricultural development ranging from irrigation, market access and improved technology among others. During my fieldwork days I spent quite a lot of time with the staff of Helvetas and read their reports and other documents at their office. Since it began its programme in Palpa in 1979, Helvetas worked primarily in the field of agricultural development and watershed management. Tinau Watershed Project (TWP) was implemented in Palpa for about ten years (1979-1988), which was followed by PDP (Palpa Development Programme) for about 6 years (1989-1995). One of the significant programmes was 'Swabalamban' (meaning self-reliance) where income generation groups were formed to help the 'farmers' in securing credit. Since 1996, Helvetas had been running Local Initiative Support Programme (LISP) in Palpa, which aimed to enable the people of Palpa district to become more self-reliant and achieve an improved level of social and economic well-being. It was implementing several programmes in partnership with local government, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) and CBOs (Community Based Organisations) in the field of coffee development, ginger promotion, vegetable/micro-irrigation, goat raising, non-timber forest promotion, social advocacy and small income generation, local broadcasting, tourism development, skill development, saving and credit, milk cooperatives, road construction, social mobilisation, participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation, and service delivery. In 2000, Yamgha VDC designed and implemented the Disadvantaged Support Programme (DSP) to support the poor and disadvantaged communities which was essentially a saving and micro-credit programme. Encouraged by the success of this programme, LISP supported the VDC office in the preparation of a rural income generation plan for the year 2058/59 -2067/68 BS (i.e. 2001/02- 2010/11) in August 2001 that did not mention the significance of remittances in people's livelihoods.

A reading of the District Development Plan (Zilla Bikas Yojana) of Palpa for the year 2060/61 BS (2003/04) showed that it was based on the slogan prepared by DDC

which read 'infrastructure with agriculture, education, health, employment and tourism' (*krisi, sikhchā, swāsthya ra rojgār paryatan sahitko purbādhār*).

All this showed that there was a shared understanding by both the state and non-state actors, both at the national and local level, about the centrality of agriculture. This understanding appeared critical in justifying several development interventions within the agriculture sector in rural Nepal.

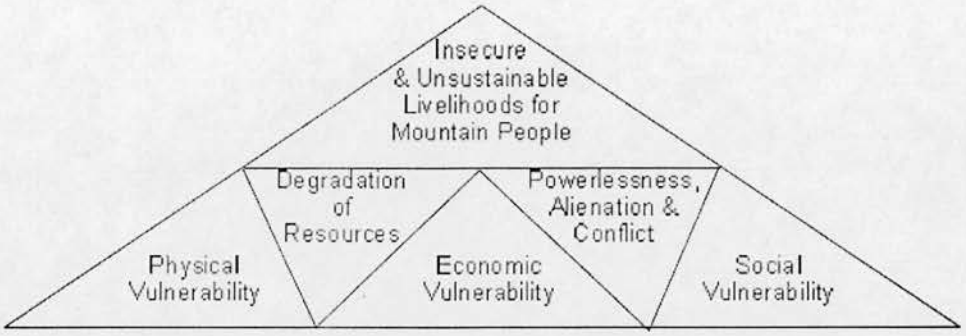
Natural resources dependent

Side by side with agriculture was the discourse on the environmental crisis in the Himalayas that complemented the sedentary life and negative representation of human mobility. As discussed in the previous chapter, particularly since the 1970's, there had been a great outcry among the donors about the potential effect of the degradation of the Himalayan environment, forcing the hill people to take refugee elsewhere (Eckholm, 1976). Environment management, particularly in the field of forest management, soil conservation and watershed management had been the common concerns among a number of policy makers and donor agencies. An FAO expert, who formulated the first policy on environment, claimed that the destruction of forests had contributed to the problems of erosion, landslides, and water deterioration and recommended initiatives in soil conservation, forest protection and aforestation (Eckholm, 1976). During the First Five Year Plan the focus of the forestry department was to be on surveying and management with the purpose of creating an inventory of existing forest resources and assessing commercial possibilities in the *terāi*. At the same time, the government adopted a conservation agenda in the hills with the introduction of the Private Forests Nationalization Act, which was passed in 1957, whose purpose was to preserve forest resources while allowing controlled use by local people. As early as 1962 an issue was raised by an UN forestry expert which linked peasant behaviours with environmental degradation with the proposal to `enlighten and educate' the rural population to undertake soil conservation and forest protection (Guthman, 1997). Till the mid 70s, the focus of

environmental policies in Nepal continued to exploit the natural resources to meet the basic needs of the people.

In 1974, Erick Eckholm, then a reporter for the New York Times was invited to attend a meeting on the 'Himalayan Problem' so that he could publish on the issue (Guthman, 1997). Later in 1976 he published an account 'Losing Ground' that popularized the Himalayan environmental crisis promoting a flood of aid in the name of Himalayan environmental management. Despite its widespread criticism, it continued to guide the aid effort in Nepal. Since then, the national five year plans consistently focussed on the threat of environmental degradation for the people's livelihoods thus proposing a different a set of solutions (HMG/N, 2003).

While most of the influential donors responded to this 'crisis' in different ways a powerful think tank named ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development) established in 1983 had been at the fore front in policy discourses on mountain environment and livelihoods. Established as a result of the global response to this 'Himalayan crisis', it aimed to help promote the development of an economically and environmentally sound mountain ecosystem and to improve the living standards of mountain populations through its research and development interface (ICIMOD, 2005). During the first decade of its existence ICIMOD conducted several studies on a variety of mountain issues: agriculture, forestry, livestock, energy, tourism, rural development, risk engineering, urbanisation, livelihoods, and biodiversity. It claimed expertise by stating that mountain poverty was quantitatively and qualitatively different from poverty in the plains. It was the dimension of vulnerability (economic, social and physical) that was considered by ICIMOD to be the defining feature of mountain environment. From the frame of reference developed by ICIMOD, the dynamics of mountain poverty could be understood by considering the following triangle.



[Reproduced from Strategy overall strategy of ICIMOD (2003-2007), page 22]

The background, rationale and its activities showed that ICIMOD understood mountain livelihoods in relation to poor agricultural productivity and degrading mountain environment. One of ICIMOD's in-house publications available online stated:

> As agriculture will continue to be the main activity in most mountains areas, the first step lies in promoting those high-value activities that are also environmentally sound. The emphasis should be on those products and activities that have special advantages in mountain areas in terms of resource endowments and skills and which can also improve the livelihoods of mountain families (Papola, 1996).[52]

A reading of ICIMOD's Strategic Plan for 2003-2007 showed that it developed its programmes around three different sectors: Natural Resource Management, Agricultural and Rural Income Diversification and Water, Hazards and Environment Management. The 'Natural Resource Management' sector focused on institutional, technological, and policy innovations for community based management to increase productivity of mountain resources to reduce poverty, enhance food security, and ensure biological conservation. The 'Agricultural and Rural Income Diversification' sector focused on the economic security of mountain people and the promotion of high-value farm and non-farm products and services and reliable market linkages. Likewise, the 'Water, Hazards and Environment Management' sector focused to improve knowledge and regional cooperation on environmental services and hazard

[52] This was available online at http://www.icimod.org/archive/icimod/publications/imd/issue2.html (accessed June 2005) as *html* format. Therefore, I have not been able to give page number.

mitigation to reduce the physical vulnerability of mountain people and the downstream poor (ICIMOD, 2003).

Likewise, a look at the policies and programmes of other donors like DFID, USAID, the World Bank and ADB demonstrated the conceptualization of people's livelihoods in relation to natural resources, in particular within the forestry sector. DFID continued to play a key role in the forestry sector, particularly through its Nepal UK Community Forestry Programme (1993-2000) and its successor Livelihoods and Forestry Programme (2001-2011) which were based on the premise that people's living conditions could be improved by managing community forestry (DFID, 2005). The Strengthened Actions for Governance in Utilization of Natural Resources (SAGUN) programme of USAID was again based on the assumption that improved governance of natural resources would lead to improved living conditions for the rural population (USAID, 2006). There were certainly other international development institutions that continued to view people's livelihoods in the hills of Nepal in relation to the environment, particularly within forestry, soil conservation and water resources. However, it was not the purpose to dissect all these, neither it was feasible to do so.

I have outlined the structure of representations in relation to a sedentary view of the rural hills in Nepal. In the above paragraphs, I tried to show the dominance of agriculture and natural resources within the development sector. This has not just affected how we understand people's livelihoods in Nepal but has also provided a powerful background for pathologizing discourse of mobility and sustaining a series of rural development interventions around these representations.

Mobility as pathology

The pathologization of mobility occured in the background of the premise that the people's livelihoods was dependent on agriculture and natural resources. Human mobility was thus represented as a lack of development implying that it was poverty that pushed people to move out. It was through such a framework that the

development agencies continued to implement various programmes that aimed to implicitly control out-migration. During the1960s Nepal saw a large scale systematic attempt of out-migration of the hill population through resettlement projects following the malaria eradication programme. With the assumption that the hill agriculture and environment was suffering from over-population and landlessness, the Rapti Valley Development Programme began by spraying DDT and encouraging the hill population to resettle in the *terāi* (Skerry et al., 1991). This response of the state was not to control but to manage the distribution of the population. Though the programme was originally intended to benefit the poorer sections of the hill population, in practice it resulted in the occupancy of the fertile land in the *terāi* by the most affluent section of the hill population (Ghimire, 1992).

Now let me show some of the authoritative attempts to link poverty with mobility. One of the authoritative tones in the development discourses was to view out-migration as a by-product of stagnant agriculture. A report published by the World Bank stated:

> The limited on-farm opportunities due to small fragmented land holdings, combined with the low productivity of land, causes many Hill and Mountain people to seek low-paying off-farm employment and to migrate to the Terāi or India—such migration has been proceeding for well over a hundred years. Many of the reasons for continued poverty can be attributed to problems in the agriculture sector (WB, 1989: ix).

The above quote assumes that if everyone was producing market oriented high value commodities they would not have to migrate. While this report clearly linked 'migration' with economic poverty, in particular the effect of stagnant agriculture, it was not clear what the authors of the report had in mind when they used the terms 'to migrate' and 'migration'.

The attempt to link migration with poverty continued in a much quoted report of the World Bank that discussed migration in a paragraph under the subtitle 'aspects of Nepali poverty'. There was a paragraph in the same report that represented migration as aberrant and constructed the image of the migrant as a victim and presented it as a by product of a stagnant economy.

> Both those who work their own fields and those who are landless must often look elsewhere for income. Among the poorest fourth of Nepali households, therefore, almost one in five (18 percent) sends away at least one worker in search of seasonal employment and relies on remittances for 27 percent of total income. Sometimes, entire households migrate. These migrants, however, carry few income-earning skills with them. If they cross into the adjacent Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, for instance, residents of the Terāi, only 21 percent of whom, on average, can read and write, will find that almost 44 percent of their rural cross-border counterparts seven years old or older are literate. The migrants—whether going abroad or, more typically, to Kathmandu—and their stay-at home relatives are likely as well to be less healthy than their neighbours in India, Pakistan and even Bangladesh (WB, 1998: 3).

Unlike in the earlier report, the use of the term migration here seemed to mean labour out-migration to other parts of Nepal or to India. It was useful to look at the NLSS (National Living Standard Survey) that continued to form background socio-economic data for most of the policy responses, including the World Bank report discussed above. I was particularly interested in the questions related to 'migration' in the survey questionnaire.

The NLSS (first part) was based on two sets of questionnaires (household and community) that attempted to collect comprehensive data on 'migration', apart from other socio-economic variables. A look at the 'household' and 'community questionnaire' used in the NLSS (first part) showed that the survey questions on migration were framed with the assumption that people migrated for economic reasons. The survey questionnaire (community section) had columns like 'list all economic activities', 'months' and so on, which were enough to give an impression that it was used to gather information on 'seasonal migration' with an economic intention. The paragraph quoted above reflected data collected from this section of the questionnaire. Unlike in the NLSS (first part) where migration information on the head of the household was sought, the NLSS (second part) collected information on migration from 'all household members 5 years and above'.

While I did not collect ethnographic data on the first round of NLSS, one enumerator who participated in the survey in NLSS (second part) (2003/04) told me that they

used the term *basāi sarne*[53] to gather data on 'migration' (Interview, 13 April 2005). In NLSS (second part) the reasons of migration were kept under pre-determined categories as: family reason (75.2 %), easier life style (11.1%) and looking for job (6.8%). Among the children the most important reasons for being away from home were for study (36.3%) and for work (18.7%). Such an influential survey seemed to miss the meaning of different forms of mobility, and policy makers seemed pre-occupied with the economic view of mobility and migration.

The following excerpt from the USAID's programme document equated labour migration to India and Nepal with stagnant poverty. Warning a severe consequence of such mobility, the document stated:

> Food deficits and the lack of business and employment prospects force able-bodied family members to migrate to urban centres in Nepal and India for temporary, seasonal and low-status jobs. This breaks up families, exacerbates rural-urban tensions and provides fertile ground for Maoist recruitment. Given a viable local livelihoods option, most of them would never leave their villages (USAID, 2006: 1).[54]

It was not clear if such an authoritative claim was supported by grounded evidence. Such a claim appeared popular among the policy makers in Nepal. My point here is to demonstrate how the above quote bundles migration together with everything 'undesirable' such as rural-urban tensions, problem of split families and Maoists recruitment.

An advisor at USAID told me that out-migration from the hills has traditionally been viewed as a by-product of poverty and stagnant agriculture, and the focus of USAID had been to help people increase their income in their place of origin. He outlined three stages of migration—high rate of migration during pre-development stage; decreased migration during development stage and ongoing increased migration since the beginning of the Maoist conflict. (Interview, 26 August 2004) This very clearly showed a link between attitude to migration and developmentalism. During

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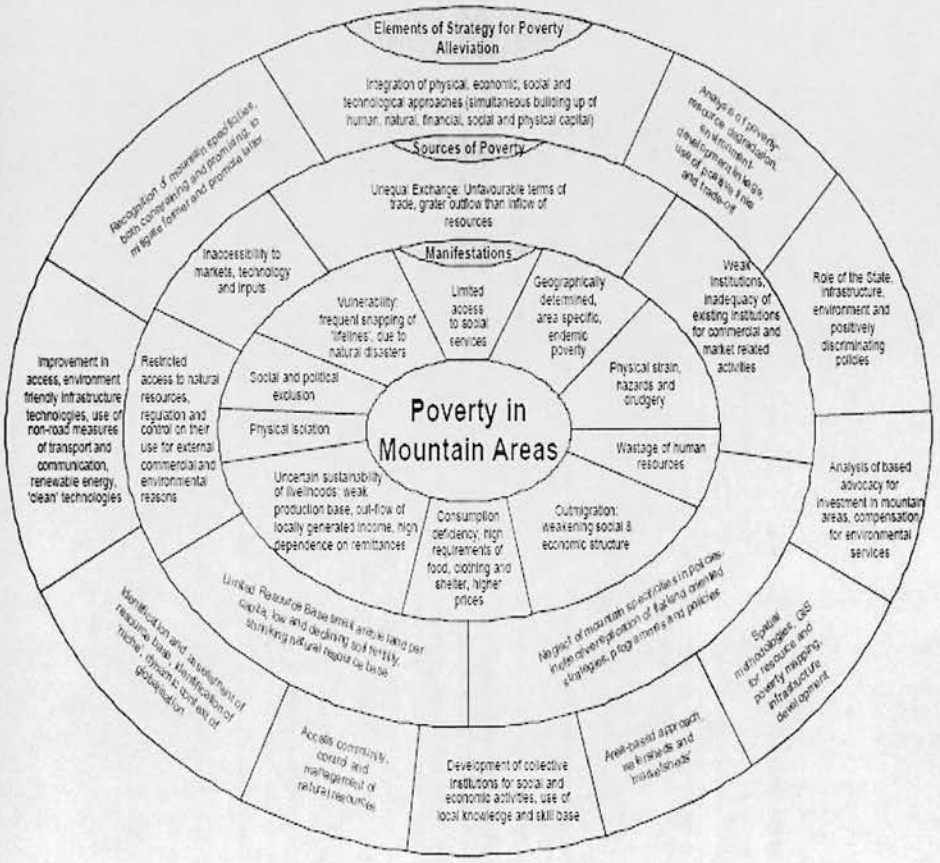
[53] It literally means 'to shift the settlement'. I shall discuss its social meaning in Chapter V in this theis.

[54] This document is available online at www.usaid.gov/np/pdf/Agriculture.pdf (accessed on 10 August 2005)

my interaction with the policy makers from different development agencies, including the National Planning Commission (NPC), I was told that 'migration' did not feature as an important element in policy formation or programmes of development. An official at NPC said, 'it is certainly a usual practice to take a reduction in the number of out-migrants as an indicator of successful rural development programmes'. (Interview, 8 April 2005) This was shared by other policy makers working with DFID, CARE Nepal and also USAID. The NPC official pointed to the large number of people out-migrating in search of work opportunities in India and the Gulf countries and told me that 'while it is true that Nepal's economy was surviving on remittances, it was no doubt one of the reasons for the underdevelopment of Nepal'. (Interview, 8 April 2005)

A Schematic Framework for Poverty Analysis and Alleviation Strategy in Mountain Areas



[Reproduced from the Strategy document of ICIMOD (2003-2007), page 102]

The diagram above reproduced from the ICIMOD strategy document showed the frame of reference through which ICIMOD looked at mountain livelihoods. While looking at it closely, we can see that 'out-migration' was viewed as one of the manifestations of mountain poverty.

ICIMOD viewed out-migration as a result of vulnerability within agricultural and the environment management sector.

> With the exception of the time during the peak agricultural season, a large number of mountain people are under-employed and are forced to migrate seasonally to the plains in search of employment. The result is that for a good part of the year women (and mostly female children) are consequently burdened to manage the farm in addition to the tasks of fetching firewood and water and other (ICIMOD, 2003: 30)

It was interesting to note the use of the term 'forced to migrate' in the above paragraph viewed seasonal mobility as an exceptional part of people's livelihoods. The strategy document then proposed the policy to commercialize agriculture in order to address the identified problem.

> The challenge is to transform the prevailing mode of subsistence agricultural production into one complemented by commercially viable agriculture. This will entail the transformation of subsistence agricultural communities to communities that can take advantage of commercial opportunities by taking advantage of the rich resource endowment and comparative advantages of mountain niches whether for specialised crops and medicinal plants or services such as ecotourism. Mountain regions offer immense scope for income enhancement through the development of mountain tourism, the harnessing of niche opportunities through rural enterprise, and the development of green agriculture (ICIMOD, 2003: 31).

While ICIMOD as an organisation seemed to represent migration as a consequence of mountain poverty, the writing of one of the policy makers at ICIMOD gave a somewhat more balanced picture of migration where he discussed the significance of mobility and its consequences, both positive and negative.

> If one ignores the lowland migrants to the highlands (as in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, or rich people from the plains acquiring summer homes in the hills in some cases) and lowland salaried workers managing public interventions in the mountains, the seasonal or periodical migration of male adults from mountain areas to the plains is a well-known form of human

> resource flow. Depending on how one looks at it, its impacts for the highlands are mixed. Besides creating labour scarcity and increasing mountain women's work burdens, the migration also generates a more regular flow of income for mountain families (Jodha, 1997).[55]

It must be remembered that the discussion was concerned with highland-lowland economic linkages. In the writings, Jodha's main concern was to address the negative aspects of human migration, where he called for an integrated approach. It stated:

> First, it requires an alteration of circumstances which force out migration by creating local, gainful employment opportunities through infrastructural development and local resource-based micro-enterprises; improving local skills and capabilities to benefit from the above changes. Improved skills can increase earnings during migration as skilled migrants can command higher wages (Jodha, 1997).[56]

However, as we saw above, this view of migration or mobility was neither reflected in the policies and programmes of ICIMOD nor in implementation.

I asked the development advisors if while formulating the problems to be addressed, they considered the fact that a significant number of population from the hills move out. To the query one of the advisors at USAID replied, 'I do not think migration is a serious issue when we formulate plans. It can become an issue at the level of programme implementation, but it is certainly not an issue at the time of policy formulation.' (Interview, 20 December 2004) Two officials at DFID recalled their fieldworkers saying that conflict induced displacement had become a big issue recently but nothing was done about it. This was shared by policy makers in USAID and CARE Nepal too. Other issues of concern to these organizations, in relation to human mobility, were the threat of HIV/AIDS, trafficking of women and children, and child labour.

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[55] This is available online at http://www.icimod.org/archive/icimod/publications/imd/issu8.htm (accessed June 2005) as html format. Therefore, I have not been able to give page number.
[56] This is available online at http://www.icimod.org/archive/icimod/publications/imd/issu8.htm (accessed June 2005) as html format. Therefore, I have not been able to give page number.

An advisor at CARE Nepal told me that seasonal migration was a regular feature in most of their programme areas, especially in the far west. He told me that 'seasonal migration' to India played an important part in the livelihoods of most of the households. (Interview 5 May 2005) Although he told me that CARE Nepal took note of 'seasonal labour migration' and its importance in the livelihoods of the population, the programmes of CARE Nepal did reflect this aspect of people's livelihoods, except when male labour migration was viewed as a problem in relation to poverty and risk of HIV/AIDS. The development programmes run by CARE Nepal had an implicit logic of discouraging such human mobility by promising to provide alternative forms of livelihoods in the agricultural or small enterprise sector. The use of the term 'seasonal migration' for out-migration of the population in search of economic opportunities across the border in India, seemed to suggest that people return home to work on their farms, thus justifying agriculture as the point of interventions.

At the level of implementation I recall an incident where the VHW (Village Health Worker) and the Peon, where I did my fieldwork, discussed a difficulty in reaching the immunization target set by the District Health Office, since often children in the immunization list would be absent i.e. they would have moved (temporarily or permanently). The following description from my fieldnotes demonstrated how migration was perceived to be the problem in the local health care delivery system.

> It was 11am; I accompanied both the Peon and the VHW in their Gaun Ghar Clinic for ward number 1 and 2 in Yamgha. When we reached the site for immunisation (just outside a small hut) there were already many children accompanied by their parents. By 2 pm, out of 56 children only 36 had turned up for immunisation. Both the health workers were under intense pressure to look for the remaining children around the village by sending out messengers but we could find only 8. Among the rest of the children, some of them had accompanied their mother to their *māmāghar*[57] while others had accompanied either or both the parents to other locales, both within and outside of Nepal. While returning from the village, the VHW shared their frustration with me—you see, here (in the village) children didn't come for immunisation; there (District Health Office) we will be questioned about it. When I was in the office last time... 'A' (name of the staff removed to maintain confidentiality) was reminding me of the target.

[57] Maternal uncle's house. When mother visit's her parent's house, she usually takes children with her.

All this demonstrated that mobility was largely viewed as a problem, at different levels: policies, programmes and implementation.

As we saw in the above paragraphs, many development agencies in Nepal suggested addressing poverty through interventions in agricultural technology, forestry, soil erosion control technology and so on, directly or indirectly linked to livelihoods based on natural resources and agriculture. This thought suggested that agriculture and environment management was not only central to people's livelihoods but should be the key element in any development strategy in rural Nepal. The development agencies ignored the existing contribution of mobility to livelihoods, and it was possible that their programmes often weakened because they did not take mobility into account. Furthermore, projects concerned with rural development, agriculture, natural resources, watershed management and so on saw rural livelihoods in terms of their own interventions.

Such a conception contradicts with established evidence that different forms of mobility in/from Nepal was a part of the life experience of a very large number of Nepalis (Hutt, 1997, Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1995, Russell, 2000, Seddon et al., 2002, Thieme and Müller-Böker, 2004, Yamanaka, 2000). It was estimated that as many as 2 million out of 27 million Nepalis lived outside of Nepal contributing significantly to people's livelihoods and poverty reduction (Seddon et al., 2002). It is certainly possible that remittances have contributed to the sustenance of hill agriculture. Nepali economy earned over USD 1 billion in remittances in 2004 that accounted for 12.4 percent of national GDP when compared to 427.3 million in development assistance (Singh, 2006). Data on mobility within Nepal, despite its significance to people's livelihoods, was not available. Since the people's movement led by Maoists in 1996, migrants within and outside of Nepal had been largely responsible for sustaining the rural livelihoods through remittances sent back home (Seddon et al., 2002, Singh, 2006).

The tendency to conceive people's livelihoods Himalayas in terms of fragility within agriculture or environmental sector has recently been questioned. Gurung argues that it is more realistic to consider mountains as dynamic and not fragile (Gurung, 2004). This perspective is quite useful not only to provide a critique of discourses on environmental crisis in the Himalayas but it allows one to consider different ways in which people in the Himalayas respond to various forces. Here, it is useful to look at the study done by Aase among the people of Manang in Nepal Himalaya (Mananges) where he provides convincing evidence to show that there was no crisis in the mountains. Instead, he shows how Mananges have managed to exploit the forces of globalisation in their favour (Aase, 2007). In a recent account, Michael Thomson and colleagues argue that *uncertainty is itself the key* to understand the environmental issues in the Himalayas. They call for a study of the institutions that create, mediate and sustain particular representation of the Himalayan environment (Thomson et al., 2006).

Therefore, this is not surprising when the production of knowledge is guided by an interest to intervene and the produced knowledge serves the interest of the intervening agencies (Mosse, 2005a). Representation of Nepal as an agrarian society paved the way for the development institutions to intervene with a set of agricultural improvements and rural development programmes in Nepal. This would not have been the same if they recognized that mobility remained an important feature of people's livelihoods in Nepal. Representation of Nepal as a nation where many people derived their livelihoods from migration would have left little room for interventions for these development agencies under the current 'authoritative' discourses. My interviews with different rural development professionals in Nepal revealed that development institutions tended to view a reduction in the number of people who out-migrate from the area as a major indicator of the success of a development programme. The implicit logic then was to discourage mobility and discuss its role as negative or at best irrelevant for people's livelihoods. Furthermore, development interventions found it quite difficult to govern a population that refused to stay in one place. This negative association of migration shaped the policy discourse which turned attention away from migration as a fact of

contemporary rural livelihoods and viewed it instead as an exception. People's mobility from one place to another was viewed as a problem; a problem that invited development and NGO interventions of different types. It became an apparatus to reduce a political problem of poverty to a technical problem of poverty alleviation through various rural development and agricultural improvement programmes (Ferguson, 1994: 256).

Conclusion

As we can see, the concept of governmentality provides a useful framework to critique the discourses on rural development in Nepal that projected mobility as an unfortunate consequence of stagnant agriculture/crisis in environment, to be solved by development polices and programmes of different types. The governmental analysis helps to show how development interventions have particular effects in managing populations and exercising authority over them by categorizing human mobility as a pathology. Despite its politics, development policy claims its legitimacy by presenting itself as a scientific and technical tool. However, the political implications of policy are justified by presenting it as a form of knowledge which fails to reflect on its own assumptions. In addition, the knowledge is produced and utilised by policy makers/practitioners for the purpose of interventions. At the same time these authoritative discourses are imposed on Nepal without respecting its social, economic and political context but rather it promotes a universal vision of people's livelihoods and mobility. The rural development policies in Nepal that conceptualize people's livelihoods only in terms of agriculture and natural resources are mistaken. Such policies fail to comprehend the complex and multifaceted nature of people's livelihoods in rural Nepal where mobility seems an important part of people's life and livelihoods. It is with these arguments I open possible ways of conceptualising the life and livelihoods of the rural population in Nepal by bringing the different forms and meanings of mobility from the western central hills.

Chapter V

Forms of human mobility: An ethnography

In this chapter I demonstrate the ubiquitous presence and importance of human mobility in the life and livelihoods of the hill population as classified and evaluated by my informants in Palpa. In it I discuss the meanings of each of these forms of mobility in relation to identity, decision making and changing political economy. The surprising degree of mobility in the fieldwork area makes me wonder whether it is possible to understand the life and livelihoods of large sections of the rural population without taking into account the perspective of mobility or movement.

Viewing mobility not as an exception but as a regular feature of people's life and livelihoods means that the types of questions we ask about it change. Rather than exclusively focussing on who moves, why people move and when they move, the chapter explores the experience of the movers and the meanings attached to these experiences. Rather than making a presumption that people prefer not to move, it explores the meanings people attach to different forms of mobility and considers the contexts where people seek and expect to find opportunities for mobility, as well as those who stay back. By introducing the different forms of human mobility in the life and livelihoods of the rural population and exploring their meanings, both for those who move and those who stay back, I open the possibility of conceptualizing the rural population in the hills of Nepal as mobile, beyond its representation as a sedentary and immobile society.

Background

As indicated in Chapter I, my interest in the field of human mobility was guided by two related concerns. First, the studies from Nepal and popular development discourses had indicated that migration was increasingly a significant variable in understanding rural social change, particularly 'labour migration', 'hill-*terāi*

migration' and 'rural-urban migration'. Second, despite such an indication, there was a lack of systematic investigation on the meaning of this aspect of Nepali society. I began this endeavour with a particular interest in bringing new insight into this process from the people's perspective. Keeping this focus in mind I went to the field to explore the ways in which migration affected the livelihoods, social relations and norms, and contributed to social change. In attempting to understand how people understood, perceived and experienced migration in relation to their livelihoods, I soon learned that not only were there many ways in which migration was perceived and experienced by different groups, migration itself appeared in many forms. I discovered a diverse set of ways to talk about migration beyond the official categories and typologies of migration found either in migration literature or in policy discourses that I was initially familiar with. I have discussed three major problems with existing categories and typologies of migration in Chapter I.

Thus I avoided the existing categories and typologies of migration. Rather I examined different forms of mobility as experienced by the people themselves and the meanings that people attached to these experiences, aspirations, constraints and possibilities in a particular ethnographic context. Understanding mobility from people's perspective showed a more complex picture than what was often taken for granted as clear and defined categories of migration.

Given such an overview, I discuss the meanings of different forms of mobility as evaluated, experienced and classified by the people whom I interacted and lived with. The focus is not on counting numbers but rather on the meanings they attached to these various experiences, aspirations, constraints and possibilities. This aids our understanding of how mobility affects people's lives and livelihoods and is affected by them.

Typologies

Moving beyond the official categories of mobility was possible by 'being there' and listening to how people categorized and experienced different forms of mobility.

Studying the meanings of mobility as evaluated, classified and experienced from the people's perspective primarily required some level of openness to listen to the people and observe and participate in their social life. Keeping the understanding of mobility in the widest sense possible, I started using the local terms that people used to talk about different forms of mobility in their everyday life. This resulted in a long list of different forms of mobility beyond the official categories that I was initially familiar with.

I have summarized the different forms of mobility as classified and evaluated by the people themselves in Table 5.1. Unlike the official categories, the classification and evaluation of forms of mobility developed by the people was multifaceted with overlapping between different forms of mobility and one form of mobility often leading to the other. Here I do not claim to have been able to explore a complete list of different forms of mobility that exists in Nepal or in Palpa. Rather the forms of mobility that I present in the table below shows some of the different forms of mobility as evaluated and classified by the people whom I interacted and lived with during my fieldwork in and around Yamgha.

Now let me talk in brief about the meaning of a few of these different forms of mobility. Since I have been able to gather more data on some forms of mobility than others, this is reflected in the discussion in the following paragraphs. For this very reason, I have limited the discussion in the following paragraphs to the most significant forms of mobility from the perspective of my informants in Palpa. A particular form of mobility, that is men who go to work in Indian cities, will be discussed in the next chapter where I exemplify its socio-cultural dimension by using the concept of masculinity.

Table 5.1

Forms of human mobility

Typologies	**History**	**Destination**	**Decision making**	**Nature/ Pattern**	**Impact for livelihoods**	**Risks**
Basāi sarne: movement of household from one place to another for settlement; to shift settlement.	exploitative state policies and social structure in 19th century, resettlement programme leading to hill-*terāi* movement	Tansen, Madi Phat, *terāi*, Kathmandu	symbolic value for socio-economic mobility, developed and modern status, social network /kin, opportunities for education, jobs, facilities and greater mobility; ancestral property and good jobs are important	mostly lifetime; contact is maintained; more common among Bahuns and better off households	socio-economic mobility; population representation is negative	lack of social network; impoverishment
Lāhur jāne: single men joining foreign armies. Those who work in such armies are known as *lāhure*	history of getting into foreign Army since early 19th century, recently decreasing	British and Indian Army; posted in different British colonies.	cultural practice; children are brought up with expectations; use of social network; source of status, ensures a good and consistent source of income; manhood	working life; contact is maintained by regular home visits; involves being absent for 15-20 years; common among Magars	positive (and sometimes negative) by household; ethnic and nationalist activist perceived negatively	life at risk; stress on women (mainly wife) left behind.

Typologies	History	Destination	Decision making	Nature/ Pattern	Impact for livelihoods	Risks
India Tira Jāne: single men work in India, people called it *sānu tino kām/ phāltu kām.*	since early nineteenth century; earlier people mainly went to border areas like Gorakhpur but now go to far away cities.	mainly different cities in India (Mumbai and Delhi are popular).	an escape; aspiration to do well; increasing responsibility in the family; manhood; presence of other friends and family members; money needed (i.e. NRs 2000)	a few years or working life; return once in year; regular messages; wife may join for treatment or for touring; common in all social groups	Perceived positive and negative by the household; development discourses view it as negative.	low income; constrained manhood; risk of being cheated and exploited
Bidesh tira jāne: single men go to foreign countries to find jobs, legal/illegal, personal network/formal agencies.	started with recruitment to the foreign army but a popular practice after 1985 Labour Act.	The Gulf and South East Asian countries common	a good escape, aspiration to do well, good level of prestige, a good route to be independent; manhood; good amount of money (i.e. about NRs 100, 00) needed; use of social network	a few years or working life, return once the contract is over in 3 years, passport, contact manpower agency, found among all social groups except poorest	perceived by the household as positive; state sees the remittance as positive but development discourse views it negatively	low income; inability to save money, constrained manhood; risk of being cheated and exploited; lack of bargaining power
Padhna jāne: to move for education that enabled to find better jobs.	Bahuns went to Banaras for education, very recently Magars have begun to go for education.	Kathmandu, Tansen, Butwal/ Bhairahawa (*terāi*), India (Banaras)	symbolic value for socio-economic mobility; enabled to find good jobs; manhood; household arranged money; social network; a good aspiration for education/jobs	several years; contact is maintained frequently; both male and female; more common among Bahuns; better off only could afford	Perceived positive; state perceives education as important but movement to cities as a problem.	inability to complete education; financial strain; might not get jobs later; might loosen contact with home.

Typologies	History	Destination	Decision making	Nature/ Pattern	Impact for livelihoods	Risks
Jāgir khāne: work for government/ other agency, with some job security and regular salary/pay.	long history with the state formation, with the growth in government, non-governmental and private offices, and, industries.	within or outside Nepal, mainly in cities, governmental, non-government or private.	source of prestige/status; security; independence; opens avenue for others in the family; manhood; investment in education; social network	Working life; return frequently; younger members are sent with them for studies or jobs; mainly Bahuns but recently Magars; tough competition	perceived positive for the socio-economic mobility by the household.	lack of social network meant a difficult posting; inability to save money and support the household.
Bhāgne: running away from home as early as 12 without consulting parents; escape for a short period or longer	existed as long as the eldest person remembers; not very common in recent time.	Butwal, Bhairahawa, Gorakhpur, Mumbai, Surat, Pune and Banglore.	usual practice; fun; escape from school; work at home, aspiration to explore the outside world and explore freedom, family responsibility; managed money by asking someone else or stole from parents; planned with friends	A few weeks/ months/ years came home after few months once the money is over or found work and continued; went in groups of 3-4; both Magars and Bahuns	perceived by the mover as fun; it is considered as deviance (mainly among the Bahuns); NGOs see it as a problem.	being trafficked and sold for work; possibilities of abuse and exploitation; stress on family back home.
Kām garna rākheko: sending children to cities for domestic help	existed as long as the elders could remember; it is more common in recent years.	Tansen, Butwal, Bhairahawa and Kathmandu.	Strategy among poorer households to lessen the household burden; opportunity for schooling and jobs; use of social network; demand of a loyal and hardworking child	A few years or working life; frequent contact with family; free food and either free education or money; both Magars and Bahuns	perceived by the household and children as positive; NGOs see it as a problem	abused and exploited; promise not fulfilled; no socio-economic mobility after work.

Typologies	History	Destination	Decision making	Nature/ Pattern	Impact for livelihoods	Risks
Tīrtha jāne: pilgrimage (within or out side of Nepal)	among Bahuns and to some extent among Magars life is considered complete only after pilgrimage	Within Nepal and outside Nepal (India) Gaya, Banaras, *char dhām*;	Considered to be an important part of one's life; a group of relatives go together; money is usually arranged in advance or paid by son; family members left back looked after home	a few weeks or days; a few widows left to die in a pilgrim site; mainly middle aged or elderly; more popular among well off; mostly among Bahuns	perceived as positive; some young members perceived it as useless activity	Debt; conflict in use of money for pilgrimage; exploitation in journey.
Keti bechne: selling women and girls; trafficking of women and children	became known since the 1990s; since then there are frequent reports of such cases.	Indian cities, mainly Mumbai, Delhi.	prospects for better future; deceived by promising better life; organized through network of traffickers; use of middle men/ women in the village	working life or a few years; contact by home visits or no contact; women and across all caste/ethnic groups; poorer	Morally wrong; state and NGOs perceived as morally wrong.	exploitation, abuse and maltreatment
Bihe garera jāne/āune[58]*:* movement of women as a result of marriage	part of culture; always been there.	husband's house	decision by parents among Bahuns; among Magars it varied; decision for visiting *māita* was taken by in-laws and the husband; use of social network; a lot of money	lifetime; contact is maintained with maternal house; mostly women move[59]; marriage pattern was different for Magars and Bahuns	a cultural practice; not moving as a result of marriage would be immoral.	abuse and exploitation; coping with pressure and new culture.

[58] the practice of women visiting their maternal house for meeting their family is known as *māita jāne*

[59] when men moved it is known as *ghar join.*

Typologies	History	Destination	Decision making	Nature/ Pattern	Impact for livelihoods	Risks
Sangai jāne: accompanying the mover.	Always present	-	accompanying person could be husband, father, mother, uncle	determined by the main person being accompanied	both positive and negative.	depended on main person
Ghar/gāũ chodeko: to leave the village/ home due to compulsion.	earlier for moral reasons (sexual offence/poor mental health) but recently due to conflict.	Known or unknown places	moral; threat to life or fear/terror; in search of safety and security; very little preparation; often without managing property or social network.	lifetime or a few years; no contact or occasional contact; assessment of the threat before moving; conflict led common among local elite.	Safe and secure	impoverishment ; stress
Bajār Jane: to go to a town market to buy/sell; for treatment or for work	Growth of commercial and administrative centres in 18th century	Butwal and Tansen.	need to sell and buy different things; to access facilities; a clear purpose/work	Daily or occasional; someone from the household; mainly men	-	threat of being cheated
Jyalādari Kām Garna Jane: Movement to work as daily wage worker	as long as the eldest member could remember; roots in unpaid labour during 19th century	Tansen or nearby villages/town	Subsistence; coping mechanism; use of social network or go and stand in *bajār* as a labourer; a good skill and physique needed.	daily or when needed; able bodied person from the household; men and women, poor; more common among Magars.	Sustenance; day to day living; no significant socio-economic mobility.	Impoverishment .

Basāi Sarne

Basāi sarne had been a major feature of life among the rural households of the western hills in Nepal. The term *basāi* meant 'settlement' and *sarne* meant 'to shift', which literally meant shifting the entire household from an area where the household has been living, and settling somewhere else.[60] According to the *Comparative Etymological Dictionary of Nepali Language* the term meant moving from one place to another for settlement/shifting (Turner, 1931). In my fieldwork area, people understood *basāi sarne* as a process of shifting the entire households from the village and settling somewhere else (outward mobility) or shifting to the village from somewhere else (inward mobility). Movement of households into the village was not common in recent years and it was not frequently discussed. In contrast movement of the household from the village was more common and it was discussed more frequently in the area. While the term *basāi sarne* meant a shift of the settlement, it was not always characterized by severing ties with the place of origin and the relatives left behind. Most of the households maintained contact with the place of origin and the relatives left behind in different ways which included mutual visits, visits during festivals including *kul poojā*[61] and special lifecycle events like marriage, death and others. Again, there were several well off households in the village who were settled in two different places These households owned one house in the village and another house elsewhere (mostly in the *terāi*, Kathmandu, Tansen) and spent their time in more than one location. Among the households who owned agricultural land in the *terāi*, one or more members of the household regularly went to the *terāi* during the planting and harvesting season for 4-6 months in total. To understand whether the movement of the household was *basāi sarne* or not, people usually considered whether the household had left property back in the village or not; and whether the household had bought property in the destination or not.

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[60] While I used the term *basāi sarne* in the household survey, not all the people understood the term and would often ask me to explain what it meant. Some people used the term *terāi jharne* (to come down to the plains) to talk about their relatives who left their household in the village and settled elsewhere.

[61] A very important festival among both Bahuns and Magars, which means 'worshipping household deity'. All or at least one member of the clan gather together, usually in their place of origin, to worship their household deity and celebrate.

History, changing pattern and destination

The historical evidence showed that the settlement in Palpa was a result of two waves of movement of people, i.e. from the south and north (Jest et al., 2000, Whelpton, 2005). Bahuns and other caste groups moved from the south and settled in the hills, whereas Magars came from north (Adhikari, 1993). Some of the households, both Bahun and Magar, claimed that they were the first settlers in the area and many others said that their forefathers moved in to the area from nearby districts (mainly Syangja and Gulmi) as a result of marriage and an invitation from relatives. This was seen in the presence of relatives, both distant and close, in these districts. Among the Bahuns of different clans, the concern for their roots was seen in their *kul poojā* when most of the members of the clan gathered to perform the worship. This interest in their roots had led some of the elders in the village to carry out research and produce a compilation of their *vamsāvali*[62] locally.

Despite this concern, the shift of the households from the village to different destinations was more frequently discussed and was considered significant in the discussions on *basāi sarne*.

Interaction with the eldest Bahun man in the village, aged 87, showed that shifting of the households from the village had been long practised in the area. All the elders I interacted with in the village felt that *basāi sarne* from the village was becoming more common compared to earlier days. An old Bahun man, in his late 70s, told me that people hardly shifted their settlement in the earlier days except for a very few households, who moved to nearby villages for reasons like marriage, relatives, relationship/emotional issues and calamities of different types. He added, 'People now a days choose to move away from the village to go to live in cities like Tansen or Butwal.' He named several of his relatives and neighbours who now lived in different areas in the *terāi* (almost all of them in Rupandehi district). (Interview, 5 September 2004) While people had been moving out of the village in search of work in India and within Nepal since the mid 19th century, such mobility was largely temporary in nature. More recently the trend was changing and now all the

[62] Genealogy; ancestral history.

households seemed to aspire to leave the village for several reasons and they may not come back to the village but rather settle somewhere else. An old Magar man in his mid 60s, who worked in India for more than 15 years, told me that more households were now moving out of the village voluntarily. The following is an excerpt from the interview with him that showed his perception of this process.

> Whatever people say I feel that our place remains important. We were born and raised in this village; we spend our days in hardship and eat whatever we grow and enjoy with whatever we have. Where will you get such a nice environment? All of our relatives are here whom we need in our life. Even in the earlier days people went to work elsewhere like I did, my father did, everybody did but they all came back home with their earnings and supported their family. Things are quite different these days. I don't know why people are so keen to leave this village. People think that property here is now a burden for them. There is nobody to buy. People are selling property for very low prices. They are just leaving without even thinking of their ancestral property. My brother did not find anyone to sell his property to; I am looking after half of his property, the rest is left barren. People are going to different places. Some are in Kathmandu, Pokhara, Butwal, Bhairahawa, Nepalgunj and so on. My own brother left the village and now lives in Tansen. While I am alive our family will not move. I don't know if my son will stay here, who knows? If things continue like this, I don't know if anybody will stay in the village. It seems this village will be empty in coming years … (laughs)….who ever you ask, they will tell you that they would like to move out. (Interview, 9 November 2004)

During the 1920's and 30's, 4-5 households from Yamgha shifted their settlement to villages surrounding Madi Phat[63]. Those households sold their property in Yamgha and bought some land in the villages around Madi Phat, mainly in Madanpokhara and the surrounding villages to settle there. Madi Phat was attractive because of its fertile land but people did not live in the valley because of the fear *aul*[64]. Rather people stayed in the hill villages surrounding the valley. This was later considered a positive move after the eradication of malaria, thus several other households moved to the same areas around Madi Phat and joined their relatives residing there. While most of these households shifted their settlement from Yamgha to Madanpokhara more than 20 years ago, there were two households who shifted two years ago. An

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[63] A valley named Madi, which is about 5-6 hours walk from the village. The land in Madi Phat is very fertile.
[64] malarial fever.

old man (Bahun) in his late 70s recalled his family's experience of shifting their settlement from Yamgha and told me:

> I was very small (7 years old). A friend of our father advised him to come and live here as it was close to Tansen and the land here was very fertile. Our father sold everything in Yamgha and came here. Later our uncle came and settled here and he bought land just next to our house. We all fell ill after we came here; those days it was different. (Interview, 5 November 2004)

Some of them shifted their settlement to Madanpokhara as early as 30 years ago and as late as one year ago.

The *terāi* was perhaps the most important wave of *basāi sarne* for the households in Yamgha since the 1950's. Until 1950s, people considered the *terāi* a danger zone because of malaria. While many men went to work in India and they travelled through the *terāi* none of the households considered settling there. Earlier it was not a very popular move among the people in Yamgha as they found little value in going and living with strangers in the *terāi*. The men who went to work in India and travelled through the *terāi* brought stories of 'strange people' they met there. Many of them were cheated during their journey in the *terāi*. *Deshi*[65] were considered to be different from *pahādi*[66] in terms of appearance, language, dress, behaviour and so on.

The State's effort to eradicate malaria by spraying DDT in 1950-60s and the resettlement scheme with support from USAID opened up opportunities for several households to shift their settlement to the *terāi*. While the aim of such programmes was to distribute land to people in an organized and equitable way, it was mostly the elite with close relations to the state who benefited from this scheme. This also led to the growth of squatter and illegal settlements in the *terāi*. Analysts have said that Panchayat government led by the king Mahendra encouraged *basāi sarne* of the hill population in the *terāi* as a part of its nation building project (Ghimire, 1992, Shrestha, 1989). As a consequence of this encouragement, the population growth rate in *terāi* increased significantly, mostly during 1970s and 1980s. While recent

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[65] People of *terāi* origin.
[66] People of hill origin.

statistics at the national level showed a slow decline in this growth, the *terāi* continued to be a very popular destination for many people from the hills. During the 1960-70's, many people in an influential administrative position, including the Bahuns who were close to the state, obtained free land (Ghimire, 1992). Here, it is equally important to consider that 'the Rana rulers retained the traditional practice of making birta land grants to win over the loyalty of Bramhans, leading members of nobility, and other politically influential groups' (Regmi, 1978).

At the beginning these people did not shift their settlement completely, but later they did as they saw an opportunity associated with productive land. The fertile land and the shifting of settlement of relatives fostered this form of movement of several households from Yamgha, both influential and less influential. People from Yamgha shifted to different parts of the *terāi*, mostly to villages in the Rupandehi district, between two popular cities—Butwal and Bhairahawa. The town of Kotihawa and surrounding villages was an important destination for the people from Yamgha. Lately, the construction of the Siddartha highway that connected the entire hill region to the *terāi* and beyond had meant that the movement was easier than earlier.

In the last 10-15 years several households from Yamgha and surrounding villages shifted their settlement to Tansen, the district headquarters, which was about 3-4 hours walk from the village. A small road built with the joint effort of the local government and local people's participation had meant that it was possible to travel to Tansen in an hour. Likewise four households had shifted their settlement to small towns in the neighbouring Syangja district following their job or business. Tansen was earlier thought to be a dying town with its original residents moving to cities in the *terāi* like Butwal and Bhairahawa and Kathmandu. It had since filled with many people from villages around Tansen, including Yamgha. Tansen was expanding with the construction of new houses, and the old houses were increasingly occupied by people from the villages. Some of these people came looking for safety and security from the conflict. The impact of this growth could be felt in the 'rocketing real estate prices' (*chunā naskne bhāu*) in Tansen. A middle aged Chetri man from Tansen who

occassionaly did the real estate business in Tansen told me that the price of *ghareri*[67] in Tansen cost anywhere between NRs 500,000 to NRs 100,000 or even more. He told me that the situation was very different five or ten years back where it was possible to get ghaderi for NRs 50,000 to NRs 60,000. (Interview, 30 August 2004)

To support their income, these newly settled households had rooms to rent for students or working people and/or began some small enterprise like grocery shops, small and cottage industries, tea shops, restaurants and lodges. Movement of people from villages, including Yamgha, and settling in towns like Tansen offered a more comfortable life with access to facilities, jobs and opportunities to begin a small business.

Since 1995, only a few households with financial capital and social networks had shifted to Kathmandu. Kathmandu had not yet become a major destination for *basāi sarne* among the households in Yamgha, except for a few Bahuns with jobs in Kathmandu and a retired British Army family.

Frequency and background of the shifters

While I did not enumerate the number of households who shifted their settlements from Yamgha, out of 140 households (70 Magar and 70 Bahun) surveyed, 32.5 per cent (18 per cent of Magar and 47 per cent of Bahun) of the households reported that they had relatives who shifted the settlement from the village and were now settled in different destinations in the previous 10-15 years. According to a survey conducted by the District Development Committee (DDC) office in 2001, 52 households had shifted their settlement in the previous five years from Yamgha VDC.[68] I was able to trace several households in villages around Madi Phat, Tansen, Kotihawa, Bhairahawa, Butwal, Kathmandu and Parasi who had shifted their settlement from Yamgha in the last four decades.

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[67] A piece of land just enough for building small house (and sometimes a small vegetable garden).
[68] According to DDC (2000), Yamgha has a total of 915 households.

An important question was—who moved and who stayed back? It was relatively well-off households with social networks and experience who were able to afford to shift their settlement and this in turn signified progress and social mobility of those households. It was comparatively difficult for the poorer households to shift their settlement to a new destination, due to a lack of financial capital and social network.

With the purpose of investigating whether there was a relationship between socio-economic situation and consideration to shift the settlement, I collected information on household's perception of agricultural production over the last five years, food sufficiency and the household behaviour on shifting the settlement from 140 households. Only a few households felt that their production had increased (6%), about one third households (32%) felt that their production level had been steady and a majority (62%) felt that their production level had been decreasing. The perception of declining production was higher among the 'potential shifter households' (86%) when compared to 'stayer households' (51%). This finding suggested that perception of declining productivity may be an important factor contributing to migration decision making among the hill households.

Similarly, only 21 per cent households had sufficient food for the whole year, 55 per cent had enough food for about six months or less and 34 per cent had sufficient food for three months or less. This finding suggested that more households from the poorer and comparatively better off households displayed a lower aspiration to shift the settlement than those in the middle. This finding indicated that the aspiration to shift the settlement was not necessarily linked to the lack of or access to material well-being (Shrestha, 1989, Shrestha, 1990). Thus, the relationship between poverty and out-migration of households appeared complex and any inference on this relationship needs to be viewed with caution.

In terms of ethnic background, Bahun households had more relatives who had shifted their settlement than Magars. As indicated earlier, a higher level of education among the Bahuns and their close association with the State as employees, enabled them to secure the land distributed by the State during 1960s and 70s in the *terāi* and Madi

Phat. The household survey showed that the Bahun households displayed more aspiration than the Magars.

Table 5.2
Potential shifter and stayer household measured by food sufficiency, perception of agricultural output and ethnicity

Food sufficiency	**Potential shifter household**	**Stayer household**	**Total**
3 month and less	9 (21%)	25 (26%)	34 (24%)
6 months and less	28 (65%)	49 (50%)	77 (55%)
The whole year	6 (14 %)	23 (24%)	29 (21%)
Total	43 (100%)	97 (100%)	140 (100%)
Perception of output			
Increasing	0 (0%)	9 (9%)	9 (6%)
Same as earlier	6 (14%)	39 (40%)	45 (32%)
Declining	37 (86%)	49 (51%)	86 (62%)
Total	43 (100%)	97 (100%)	140 (100%)
Ethnicity			
Magar	7 (16%)	63 (65%)	70 (50%)
Bahun	36 (84%)	34 (35%)	70 (50%)
Total	43 (100%)	97 (100%)	140 (100%)

Decision making and organisation

Given the age-old practice of *basāi sarne*, the question—why did a number of households shift their settlement from the village to settle in different destinations—seemed irrelevant to the people and the households I spoke to and studied. For them, it largely symbolized progress, development and social mobility. It had both symbolic and material value for the upward mobility of the households. For most of the households *basāi sarne* reflected the socio-economic mobility among the households in the village and it was again a major route to upward mobility.

Important questions were—how did the households make decisions about shifting the settlement or staying back? Under what conditions did the households make decision about shifting the settlement or staying back? The decision to shift or not to shift the settlement appeared to be dependent on the household's access to financial capital, social network, ongoing practice, job and education among others.

None of the informants in the village told me that their relatives had left the village due to ecological or economic pressure. Rather they understood *basāi sarne* as a planned strategy which symbolized upward mobility, which was also reflected in the experiences of the households who had shifted their settlement from Yamgha. In an interview, one old Bahun woman who had many relatives who had shifted their settlement said, 'those who can afford have been going. For people like us, maybe it is written in our fate to stay here.' (Interview, 7 November 2004) Another middle aged Bahun man said, 'you ask me, who does not have the wish to go? The better off have all gone. Some are leaving, see, Maila brought some 5, 6 *lākh* (NRs 500,000 to 600,000) from Saudi Arabia; they are looking for people to buy their property here. He might have a plan to go somewhere in Butwal.' (Interview, 9 November 2004) Access to facilities like schools, health services and better income opportunities in the destination was perceived as an important factor prompting the households to make decisions about *basāi sarne*. For instance, a Magar woman I interviewed in the village understood the *terāi* as a land of comfort where they would not have to walk for hours to fetch water or work hard, compared with life in the difficult terrain in the hills. She had heard that it offered access to market and cheap grains and vegetables for consumption. Extreme heat (around 42 degrees) in summer and various frightening diseases were considered by her to be the only disadvantages of shifting the settlement to the *terāi*. (Interview, 5 November 2004)

Among the households surveyed 43 per cent indicated they had considered moving away (potential shifters) and 97 per cent indicated that they had no thoughts on moving (stayer). The reasons given for a positive consideration to shift the settlement provided a means for assessing which behavioural attitudes predominate among the 'potential shifters'. In the survey, out of 43 households who considered shifting, about 40 per cent felt that there were more opportunities outside the village prompting them to shift their settlement and about the same felt that they lacked modern facilities in the village. Similarly, the reasons given for staying back provided a means for assessing which behavioural attitudes predominated among the 'stayer households'. Attachment to place, inability to afford a move and inability to sell were the major reasons why people considered staying back. Although relatively

few household heads in the sample indicated they had considered moving away, their reasons behind a consideration to shift the settlement indicate evaluations of their household's production capabilities.

Table 5.3
Possible reasons to shift the settlement

SN	Response Categories	Total households
1	More opportunities	17 (40 %)
2	Lack of facilities here	11 (26 %)
3	No income here	7 (16 %)
4	Everybody is moving out	5 (11 %)
5	Why stay here?	3 (7 %)
Total		43 (100 %)

Table 5.4
Possible reasons to stay back

SN	Response Categories	Total households
1	Home land, birth place, relatives	33 (34 %)
2	Can't afford	18 (19 %)
3	Life is good here	12 (12 %)
4	Why to migrate elsewhere?	12 (12 %)
7	Can't sell land/property here?	10 (11 %)
6	Where can 'I'/We' go?	6 (6 %)
8	Never thought of it	4 (4 %)
5	Good Climate	2 (2 %)
Total		97 (100 %)

The history of a Magar household that had shifted their settlement to Kathmandu showed that the money earned from recruitment to the British Army facilitated the household's movement from the village. It was the desire of the man working in the British Army to educate his children in an English boarding school in Kathmandu that was instrumental in the household's decision to leave the village and settle in Kathmandu. Two of his sons who went to school in Kathmandu were in the United States and a daughter was in the United Kingdom.

Money played an important role in making decisions about *basāi sarne*, as a good amount of money was required for planning and executing the move. The existence of ancestral property in the potential destinations offered better opportunities and played a key role in decision making among a number of households who did not

have to worry about buying property in the new destination to enable them to settle there. There were a few households, more Bahuns than Magars, who had inherited property in the *terāi* or in Tansen from the time of land resettlement when they had used their social network, experience, influence or had bought using their capital accumulated by working for the State. The households that had family members working for the State in different destinations had opportunities to buy land, both a *ghareri*, usually in cities or towns and a relatively bigger piece of land meant for agricultural purpose, usually in villages (*kheti garne jamin*), in those places. Among the Bahuns these included the teachers and other civil servants working for the Nepali government whereas among the Magars these included those who had members recruited to the British or higher position in Indian Army. Some households had recently been able to build property (*sampatti jodne*) by accumulating capital from jobs or other enterprises, a large part included the remittances sent by those working abroad in the Gulf and Malaysia.

Those who had a good amount of land in the village were able to sell it to shift to Tansen, Madi Phat or different places in the *terāi*. The households who had relatives who had moved from the village reported that 88 per cent had sold their property to relatives left behind. Selling the land in the village to arrange *basāi sarne* was a very common strategy in earlier days but this strategy was no longer applicable in recent years. Those who wanted to sell their property did not find buyers. At the same time, the property price in the village remained more or less stagnant, while the property in the potential destinations was far higher. This made it extremely difficult for some village households to shift their settlement without a very big source of income. A middle aged Bahun was eager to shift to Tansen or to Butwal but expressed his inability to do so through selling the property he had in the village. He had been to Kuwait for 3 years but the saving made over the three years was not enough to buy a *ghareri* in Tansen. He was preparing to leave for Saudi Arabia for another 2-3 years, which he thought would provide the necessary capital for building a house in Tansen. The low prices of property in the new destination in earlier days meant that even the relatively poorer households were able to move by selling their property in the village. Earlier, it was possible to get a small piece of land in the *terāi*, villages

around Madi Phat and Tansen, and it provided a good livelihood—additionally it was possible to squat and make use of forest resources, which has now become impossible because of strict regulations.

While money played an important role in a household's ability to shift settlement, it was the social networks established through relatives that played a key role in facilitating the shift of the household. Almost all the households that I followed in Madanpokhara, Tansen, the *terāi* and Kathmandu had shifted their settlement with the support of their relatives, and in turn they had facilitated the movement of other relatives. All the households who moved from Yamgha and settled in Madanpokhara were exclusively Bahuns, mostly of Basyal patronymic. The Bahun and Magar households that I visited in Kathmandu lived very close to their relatives, with housing next to each other. In two cases there was only one gate to enter both the houses. These households had facilitated the movement of several of their relatives to the same locality by arranging the land and providing a loan.

Another key element that played an important role in decision making was the experience of the household away from the village, primarily through the household members who had worked elsewhere. Movement of the household member, mainly for employment, did not just provide money but enabled experience to be gained about places outside their village. This enabled the household to make a comparison of the livelihood opportunities and make decisions about the movement accordingly. The experience of the outside world had made the people in Yamgha see themselves as poor, underdeveloped and people who lagged behind (*pachādi pareko*) when compared with other places. *Basāi sarne* was understood as an escape from underdevelopment. This was reflected in the high aspiration to shift their settlement in those destinations.

Time span and contact

In the main *basāi sarne* was mostly for life. There was a degree of permanence attached to *basāi sarne* in that the shifted households never returned, though they maintained different degrees of contact with kin at the source area. Except for a few,

most of the households did not sever the ties with the source area and kin. Rather they maintained contact with the place of origin and relatives left behind by mutual visits during *kul poojā* or other festivals, marriage, medical treatment or other property and familial issues. Those who severed the ties with the source area and the relatives were morally looked down upon.

Among the 32.5 per cent of households who had relatives who had moved recently, 95 per cent of them said that shifted relatives had maintained contact with their place of origin by mutual visits and visits for festivals like marriage, *kul poojā* or significant events. A few Bahuns of the Bashyal patronymic who had shifted to Kotihawa and Madanpokhara performed their *kul poojā* in the new destination. A Bahun, in his late 70s, whose family had shifted their settlement to Madapokhara told me, 'We used to go to Yamgha for *kul poojā* but these days we do it here. Now there are many *dāju bhāi*[69] here, so we decided to do *kul poojā* here.' (Interview, 4 January 2005) During my fieldwork, a large number of relatives from different places had visited the village at the time of a death ceremony in a Bahun household. Similarly, several relatives who had shifted their settlement visited the village at the time of a marriage that took place in a Magar household.

These households who had moved out referred to their village as *gāũ* or 'Palpa' and visited sometimes for marriages or other festivals. Many of them maintained the contact through marriage. However this was changing as in recent years the shifted households had begun to extend their marriage network to other places. This was mostly due to what was referred to as 'love marriage' which had become more common in recent times.[70]

The people from the village frequently visited their relatives *(pāhunā)* in different destinations. The visitor usually brought gifts (fruit, local vegetables, ghee (butter oil), beans etc) with them when they visited and stayed at their house. While the

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[69] Close relatives.

[70] For an ethnographic study of marriage practices among Magars in Palpa, see: AHEARN, L., M. (2004) *Invitations to Love: Literacy, Love Letters and Social Change in Nepal,* New Delhi, Adarsh Books.

guests were considered to be very important and the host family would treat them with respect, their repeated visits were not entertained by all, particularly because they would bring many problems with them. The households in Kathmandu who hosted relatives from the village had to deal with administrative, legal or job related issues. Several of these households helped their relatives back in the village by educating some of their children in Kathmandu or by arranging a job through their social network, which opened up opportunities for later.

Impact on livelihoods

The experience of those who shifted the settlement showed that *basāi sarne* had a positive impact in their livelihoods. All the shifted households were happy with their decision to move. Interaction with three of the shifted households in Madanpokhara showed that they were all happy with their move and considered their decision to shift settlement from Yamgha a positive one which had improved their quality of life. The shifted households in Madanpokhara considered themselves more developed than their relatives back in Yamgha who, according to them, lagged behind in education and income. A man who migrated to Madanpokhara 28 years back declared, 'We have all the facilities here, road, television, school, campus, water. Yamgha is not convenient (*payak*); it is a difficult life there. They (people in Yamgha) hardly have a road; there is nothing.' (Interview, 6 January 2005) Depending on their socio-economic position, some people owned land, some found jobs in nearby towns or villages while others managed small enterprises like tea shops or restaurants.

Popular representation

Basāi sarne occupied an important space in the national media, school text books, literature and development policies where the rural households were represented as victims of economic and ecological crisis. It had been taught, discussed and represented in mainstream pubic life in Nepal in a rather pessimistic way. Such a representation forced the understanding of *basāi sarne* as an abnormal process, where the hill population was forced to leave their place of origin and take refuge in the *terāi* or elsewhere. An interesting example of this form of representation in

public life in Nepal is found in a very popular Nepali novel, titled *Basāi*[71], by Lila Bahadur Chetri, which portrays the life of Dhane Basnet and his family in a hill village in eastern Nepal who were forced to leave their 'settlement' due to poverty, debt and economic exploitation. Many stories, poems, novels and songs, portraying the pessimism around *basāi sarne*, were written in Nepali during the last few decades (Hutt, 1998).

The NGO workers and DDC officials I met in Palpa believed that many households had moved out of villages due to poverty. The data available at the DDC categorized the reasons of *basāi sarne* as economic, social, educational, natural calamity and others. When I approached the Social Development Officer at the DDC office and asked him about the survey, the data on *basāi sarne* and meaning of each of these categories, he informed me that the survey was a part of a socio-economic survey of the households conducted by the DDC for the entire district. He added, 'As you are probably aware, *basāi sarne* can occur due to several reasons; it could be social, economic, natural calamity and so on. So, we tried to find out how many households went out of the village. We carried out a household survey in VDCs with the help of VDC secretaries and gathered this data.' (Interview, 31 August 2004) Neither the officials at the DDC nor the VDC secretaries could explain to me what those categories meant, but they explicitly indicated that it was a response to poverty.

I found that such a pessimistic popular representation of *basāi sarne* contrasted with the meaning most of the households (stayer, shifter or potential shifter) associated with it. As I indicated above, it largely symbolized progress, development and social mobility to all of the households.

Lāhur Jāne

Commonly known as *lāhur jāne*, movement of male family members to join foreign armies had long been a practice among the Magars in the area and elsewhere in

[71] The novel is taught as a text book in the intermediate degree (Intermediate in Arts/Intermediate in Commerce/Intermediate in Science degrees) and it can be assumed that most of the people who have completed their schooling would have read this novel.

Nepal (Des Chene, 1991, Adhikari, 1993). The term *lāhur* came from the name of the city of Lahore in Pakistan. It was originally used to refer to the hill men who went to Lahore to work in the Sikh leader Ranjit Singh's army in the early 19th century (Caplan, 1991). The practice of *lāhur jāne* was very much linked to the identity of the Magars. It was an obvious answer to the question—what do the Magars do. Among the Magars, the success of a man's life was measured in terms of his ability to join a foreign Army. The presence of the Indian Army Pension Camp and British Army Welfare Society in Chilangdi and Khorbari respectively, which were about two hours walk from Yamgha, signified the ubiquitous importance of *lāhur jāne* in the life of the Magars. I observed many retired Indian Army *lāhures* from surrounding villages and districts, come to the pension camp to collect their pension. Holding their pension documents (*pensing pattā*) in their hand, many of them were seen walking around the tea shops, seasonal hotels and restaurants outside the pension camp.

While the term *lāhure* indicated mainly those who went to work in foreign armies, it was sometimes used as a generic term to talk about those men who went to work outside of Nepal and contributed to the households left behind. A group of scholars have used the term *New Lāhure* (Seddon et al., 2001) to talk about the new waves of labour mobility in recent years to the Gulf and South East Asian countries, including India. The movement primarily was meant to contribute to the smooth functioning of the household and to opening opportunities for the socio-economic mobility of the household. In certain situations the term *lāhure* was used as opposite to *chāure* or *phāltu*, which meant useless. The terms *chāure* or *phāltu* in these contexts were used in comparison to *lāhure* to talk about men who went to work as manual workers in India. At the same time the term *lāhure* was widely used in a variety of different ways in the everyday conversation in the village.

While the earlier use of the term *lāhure* was locally limited to Magars, mainly to refer to service in a foreign army, the new use of the term *lāhure* included other caste groups, including Bahuns, and other forms of labour services apart from the foreign army. It was now possible for a Bahun man who went to work in Mumbai or Kuwait

to be known as *lāhure*. But in terms of gender, *lāhure* exclusively referred to men and not to women. This meant that women were not known as *lāhure*, even if they went to work outside of Nepal. I provide a further discussion on the complex meanings associate with *lāhure* in the next chapter.

Lāhures did not just leave the village to earn money but they also returned with the experience of a different culture, whether it was India, United Kingdom, Malaysia, Singapore or the Gulf countries. However, not all of them returned back rather chose to stay back in different places.

Thus the meaning of *lāhur jāne* was not limited to service in a foreign army or just earning money within Nepal or in a similar culture but it was defined more in terms of ability to earn money to run the household as well as to gain the experience of a place away from Nepal. Despite the complex meanings military service largely defined the practice of *lāhur jāne*. I will discuss the other forms of mobility that were sometimes known as *lāhur jāne* later in this thesis.

History and destination

For as long as the eldest member I had met could remember, Magar men had been recruited to foreign armies, both the British and Indian Army, as a means of supplementing the livelihoods of the households. Since the early 19th century remittances from working in a different country had been a major source of income among the Magars and other caste and ethnic groups.

In the course of their invasion of Nepal after 1814, the army of the British East India Company had several confrontations with the Nepalese (Gorkhali) army which displayed the military skill and bravery of the Tibeto-Burman people, who were extensively used in the army. Initially, the Nepali government was opposed to the inclusion of its citizens in the British Army. Thus to facilitate the recruitment, the British established recruitment centres in Gorakhpur and Ghoom, the Indian towns close to the border with Nepal (Caplan, 1995). Even though the Nepalese rulers were against it, many villagers were eager to join it. The systematic recruitment of

Magars, along with other hill ethnic groups, began with the defeat of the Nepali army in the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-1816 that was concluded by the Segauli treaty. Although it would appear that the treaty empowered the British and East India Company to recruit these people, it is believed that the right of recruitment was derived from a convention agreed with the Nepali commander in western region (Amar Singh Thapa) in May 1815 (Caplan, 1995).

Whether one was a British *lāhure* or an Indian *lāhure* determined their destination in the world. Most of them in Yamgha had been to different parts of India, while a few of them had been to Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, Malaysia and Burma. The names of those places were not just familiar to the *lāhures*, who had been there, but also to the people left back in the village. It was usual practice among the retired *lāhures* in the village to talk about their stories of battle and experiences in different places around the world. I listened for hours to some of their stories, which they were very enthusiastic to share. They did not just contain the experience of the war but also included descriptions of the place, people, food and so on. The experience was reflected in the frequent use of English words like 'recruit', 'hello', 'fight', 'attack', 'position', 'shelter', 'camp' among others. The village households with *lāhures* (both current and retired) would have photographs from different places displayed in *pirhi*[72] outside their house where visitors would be greeted when they arrived.

Frequency and background

Out of 70 Magar households included in the survey, 14 households had *lāhures* working with the Indian Army and only 3 households had *lāhures* working with the British Army. While there were reports from the surrounding villages that a few Bahuns had joined a foreign army, I did not find such a case in Yamgha village. There were a total of 17 men currently recruited to the Army and 12 retired Army men in the survey households. Many Magar informants told me that recruitment to the British and Indian Army had declined sharply in recent years due to a decrease in recruitment and stiff competition. At the same time, there was increasing pressure from the Maoists who were opposed to the idea of recruitment to a foreign army. A

[72] veranda.

male Maoist activist aged 24 I met in the village said, 'This is an unfair practice, where the blood of poor innocent Nepalis is sacrificed for the benefit of the imperial expansionist.' (Interview, 10 November 2004) Despite this, none of the households in the village told me that they were directly threatened to stop sending their family members for recruitment though, depending on the income level, a few households with *lāhures* paid a donation to the Maoist. In addition to foreign armies, the men had begun to enlist in the Nepali Army, or if they were unable to serve in any military capacity, they travelled to India, the Gulf or Malaysia to work as manual labourers.

Recruitment to foreign army service and foreign security services was exclusively limited to Magars and other hill ethnic groups due to their ascribed identity as a martial race. The households with *lāhures* were relatively better off than the other households, largely because of the contribution of the *lāhure*.

Decision making and organisation

The Magar men showed overwhelming interest in *lāhur jāne* due to both the material and symbolic value it offered. Moreover it featured as an important part of life among the Magars. It had been a cultural practice as long as the eldest person spoken to could remember. For a Magar man, it was the first thing to do.

By the local standard, a *lāhure* could earn a substantial amount of money that far exceeded the economic strength of anyone else in the village. It was the ability to earn and save a substantial income that played an important role in the decision making. Moreover, it was the pension that secured life after retirement. It opened up opportunities for a better quality of life, not just for the *lāhure* himself, but for the entire household. By the village standard, the presence of a household member in the British army meant that the household would be counted as one of the richest and most influential in the village. The Indian Army did not offer as much when compared to the British Army but the households with their member in the Indian army were able to meet most of their cash needs. While the aspiration to be recruited to the British Army far exceeded the Indian Army due to its attractive pay and status,

the former was more competitive than the latter. One of the significant opportunities provided by *lāhur jāne* was that it allowed the possibility to shift household to a nearby town or a bigger city with more facilities and opportunities than in the village.

The symbolic value of *lāhure* was a very important one as it earned respect in the village. *Lāhures* were considered more experienced and knowledgeable individuals and people, mostly kin, went to them for advice or even a loan when they needed cash. The status it brought to the entire household was highly cherished by the *lāhure* households. The retired *lāhures* preferred to wear their clothes from their army days and walk around the village—it was mostly a woollen cap or a sweater. This signified that the person was either a *lāhure* himself or some close relative of a *lāhure*. Most of the returned and retired *lāhures* would be known as *lāhure dāi, lāhure kānchā, lāhure māilā, cāptain, hawaldār,* and *subedār* among others, rather than by their name. A teacher who was the son of a retired captain of the Indian Army was not known as teacher or by his own name, but people called him captain's son (*cāptain ko choro)*. The *lāhures* in the village were known by these names and most of the people in the village did not even know their actual (formal) names. The value was not just economic but a political one too. The *lāhure* households were able to give money on loan, donate to welfare services like schools/health posts/drinking water schemes, consume the best food and hire labour. Moreover, if one decided to return to the village after retirement, it offered opportunities for an influential political position in the village.

Male children were brought up with the expectation of being a *lāhure* when they grew up, while female children were brought up with the expectation of getting married to a *lāhure*, who could offer security and happiness. Male children were often told that one of the major meanings of life was to get recruited to a foreign Army, which ensured the livelihoods of the household. Children were often told the stories of *lāhures*, including the different experiences *lāhures* go through during their time abroad. There was one instance where a returned *lāhure* was sharing his experience in the village, close to a tea shop and a group of village men from different social groups, adolescents and children were listening to him. Children were

constantly exposed to *lāhures* coming and going from their own households and community, who often got much more attention than anyone else in the village. When *lāhures* came home during holidays, they brought sweets for children in the village and many children followed them throughout the day.

To get recruited, candidates needed to go through several layers of selection and short listing to enable them to be a *lāhure,* which was viewed as a matter of great success and happiness for the household. The role of the relatives was crucial in terms of guidance during the preparation for initial selection that took place in a nearby village or in Pokhara. Completion of school education was not considered very important in the earlier days for the selection but it is considered important these days. The earlier *lāhures* were not highly educated people; many of them went to school no further than primarily level. Most of them acquired basic education during the training period.

The sending household was conscious of the need to provide the potential *lāhure* with a good diet and physical exercise to enable him to build a good physique. The preparation aimed to produce a strong boy with good physical health. Good stamina, a broad chest and a good height were considered to be assets that would increase the probability of success. Carrying a heavy load from a young age was encouraged. Boys were constantly encouraged to keep themselves physically fit and keep up their aspiration to compete in the selection camps.

The elders told me that in earlier days not everybody wanted to become a *lāhure* as it was considered dangerous. Several people from the village died while others returned disabled. An elder remembered the time when several *gallā*[73] used to come to the villages to convince the younger men to join the foreign army but this is no longer the trend. These brokers brought with them sweets to convince *(phakāune)* young able bodied men to join the army. There was a time when the young men were advised to be conscious of unknown persons (*parāi or nachineko mānche*) and *gallās* who took them forcefully for recruitment. This had certainly changed in the recent

[73] Recruiter; who went to different villages in the hills for recruiting men in foreign army.

years with stiff competition, and brokers no longer visited the village to select the young men. Most of the young Magar boys went for initial selection but only a handful of them were successful, whereas others were forced to look for alternative employment after failing in the selection. As indicated earlier, recruitment had declined in recent years due to an increasing population and stiff competition and as a result young Magars have started to go wherever the work was available; therefore, there was a significant increase in movement for work to India, the Gulf and Malaysia. Though there were fewer jobs available in a foreign Army and there were fewer *lāhures* in the village, people maintained a strong memory of *lāhures* and *lāhur jāne* in their everyday life. They would often talk about their father, grandfather, uncle or some relative who was a *lāhure*. It was considered to be a matter of pride for the entire family. After all of her three sons were unsuccessful, a Magar woman said:

> Our 'fate' (*bhāgyā*) is quite bad. None of them (her sons) could get selected. They are all 'useless' (*phāltu*). After several attempts we managed a loan and sent the 'second son' (*māilo)* to Qatar and the 'first son' (*jetho*) to Bombay. The 'youngest' *(kāncho)* is still wandering around the village; wondering now what to do? He might begin 'to plough the fields' (*halo jotne*). I don't know why even after having three sons, our status is like this. We had great expectations when we had three sons; what did we do to turn out to be like this. (Interview, 17 September 2004)

The households did not need to pay money for selection and recruitment was free. However a few of the households felt that some sort of bribe to the brokers helped in getting recruited.

Time span and contact

After serving for 15-30 years, *lāhures* returned and spent their retired life with the family back in the village or elsewhere if they chose to shift their settlement. In recent years many of the retired *lāhures* began to go back to security related jobs, both within and outside of Nepal. The rise in the security business globally and in Kathmandu in particular, provided an additional opportunity for the retired *lāhures* to look for jobs in this emerging sector.

After recruitment, *lāhures* came back home during their holidays at least once every two years. When a *lāhure* came back to the village during his holidays, there were several feasts offered by his household for the close relatives and close relatives also organized several feasts. A *lāhure* family and his relatives spent a good amount of money on these feasts. Many *lāhures* were unmarried when they were recruited but later got married when they came home for holidays. It was not always possible for the *lāhures* to come home at the time of important events at home. Sending letters was the most important and frequent means of communication between the household at home and the *lāhure* who went to work in distant places. While a few *lāhures* had taken their wives and children with them for a few years, the wives and children were usually left behind in the village.

Impact on livelihoods

Good earnings from *lāhur jāne* in the form of remittances helped the families to climb socially and economically. It helped the households to lead a good quality of life. Many of them bought land in the village, mostly paddy land to grow rice and/or bought land and/or property in the *terāi*, Tansen or Kathmandu, which paved the way for their *basāi sarne*. People often wanted to sell land/property to *lāhures* as they would pay cash instantly and usually paid more money than other people. It was interesting to note that there would be rumours about which *lāhures* had got how much money, etc. *Lāhures* were the potential buyers of property in Tansen, Butwal and Bhairahawa. The *lāhures* sent remittances through money orders and contributed continuously to the smooth functioning of the household. I observed retired *lāhures* and their family members standing in queues to receive remittances in the bank in Tansen.

It was quite obvious that after their retirement the *lāhures* gained more status in the village and people looked up to them. A few of them became involved in local politics and became influential in decision making at the local level. The *lāhures* got the most beautiful ladies and the best proposals for marriage. The first thing Magars inquired in the village about a marriage was whether the person was a *lāhure* or not,

and would then explore what type of *lāhure* i.e. whether he was a British *lāhure* or an Indian *lāhure*, whether he was a soldier (*sipāhi*) or a captain (*captain*) in rank.

Popular representation

Lāhur jāne featured in popular debate in different ways. It certainly featured as an important part of hill ethnic groups' livelihoods and identity. It had also been seen as a response to exploitation and poverty in Nepali literary representations (Hutt, 1989). The ethnic activism viewed it as a form of exploitation and the cause of their backwardness. The Magar activists whom I met in Kathmandu told me that Magars had been socially and economically backward because they never paid attention to education. They opined that they had been exploited and sold by the Nepalese rulers to fight for the British expansion and the Indian government. The Maoists viewed it as fighting for other people's imperialism. *Lāhur jāne* was viewed as the most undesired livelihoods option in these discourses, whereas interaction with the people showed that it had indeed become an important source of livelihoods, and an important source of socio-economic mobility. I did not find the ethnic activist discourses protesting the practice of recruitment to a foreign Army present in the village. While many Magar men I met in the village were aware that the Maoists were against this, they defended recruitment to a foreign Army with the rationale that it provided them with a good livelihoods and security. The retired *lāhures* I spoke to did experience harsh and difficult times during their service but they did not consider *lāhure jāne* as a form of 'exploitation' as advocated by the Maoists or ethnic activists. All the Magars I met in Yamgha found Army service very attractive, and felt sad that this opportunity was reducing for them, which had led to moving to India, the Gulf and Malaysia.

Padhna Jāne

People used the term *padhna jāne* to talk about those who moved out of the village to acquire education. This movement was significant as it resulted in securing jobs, providing opportunities for socio-economic mobility for the household and occasionally led to a shift of the settlement of the entire household.

Comparatively, education was valued more among the Bahuns than the Magars and more among males than females, and this was reflected in the number of people who went for education from each of these groups (See table 5.5). From the perspective of Bahuns, education was an important aspect of their priestly identity and to get jobs. The Bahun children were brought up with high hopes for acquiring education which played an important role in their identity. In recent years, a few Magars began to send their children for education to Tansen and Kathmandu, primarily because they thought that education led to more opportunities and it was an important route to development. This was reflected in the statements of some Magars who felt that they were backward due to a lack of education. Along with the movement of Magars to universities and colleges, they had formed associations along ethnic lines.

Table 5.5
Educational background of the survey population

Education		**Magar**		**Bahun**	**Total**
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Illiterate	60 (25%)	109 (45%)	18 (8%)	54 (22%)	241 (100%)
Just literate	24 (22%)	22 (20%)	31 (29%)	31 (29%)	108 (100%)
Below class 5	91 (34%)	69 (26%)	42 (16%)	62 (24%)	264 (100%)
Class 6-10	58 (34%)	14 (8%)	66 (38%)	35 (20%)	173 (100%)
SLC	9 (14%)	3 (5%)	31 (48%)	21 (33%)	64 (100%)
Intermediate	4 (12%)	1 (3%)	18 (53%)	11 (32%)	34 (100%)
Bachelor & above	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	13 (65%)	5(25%)	20 (100%)
*Not Applicable**	*18 (25%)*	*12 (17%)*	*22 (30%)*	*20 (28%)*	*72 (100%)*
Total	266	230	241	239	976

* Not applicable to children below 5 years old.

The meaning of *padhna jāne* had changed over the years allowing new patterns and new actors. During the earlier days, a few Bahun men went to Tansen, Banaras and Kathmandu for their education and returned to the village upon completion of their education to work as priests, teachers and state employees locally. It was important to move away for education so that they could return to the village and hold some important positions locally. In recent years, an increasing number of people, and not just Bahuns, had continued to move out of the village for education to Tansen and Kathmandu. But unlike the earlier people, they did not come back to the village after their studies. Rather they were continuing to remain in the cities, mainly in

Kathmandu, finding employment opportunities. People left the village not to return. The departure from the village to the cities for education, in most of the cases, was a permanent movement leading to salaried employment and possibly the shifting of the settlement to the city. Likewise, it was more common for the young girls to move out of their households to acquire education, which was not common earlier. As a result of social change, this shift had taken place in one generation.

Education away from the village was increasingly valued for its quality and it was believed to prepare the person for employment opportunities. While most of the children received their primary education in a local school, increasingly a few better off households had begun to send their children to private boarding schools in Tansen, Butwal and Kathmandu, which had an important symbolic and instrumental value for them. It was believed that early education in the cities opened up better opportunities for much desired salaried employment. Thus, it was both the younger children and younger adults who went for education to the cities. An important reason for sending children to boarding schools was related to the use of English being seen as important to gain employment.

The households financed education of the younger members with an expectation that their children would later find employment and contribute to the security of the household. Increasingly, investment in education in the cities was a strategy adopted by the Bahun households, who often took out loans or sold a part of their property to enable their children to get educated. The children in return were expected to study hard and secure a job to enable the household to pay off the loan and ensure the smooth functioning of the household. Education in the cities was usually supported by close relatives in the cities, who often provided guidance and in some cases offered accommodation.

Most of these students lived in shared rented rooms with a close friend or a relative. They were financially supported by their households while a few with qualifications and social networks had managed to find work to support their own expenses in the

city. Except for a few better off ones, most of them found it extremely difficult to cover their expenses in the city, with the rising prices.

Movement for higher education to colleges and universities was the most significant form of 'educational' mobility from the village. In addition to completing their education, the new place offered them a new network of friends and exposed them to a new experience in life. Those who went to college and universities, experienced an unfamiliar political and ethnic environment. Some of them took part in organisations and became politically active. This exposed them to new ideologies and aspirations, which again changed their relationship with home.

Jāgir Khāna Jāne

People used the terms *jāgir khāna jāne* (literary meaning to eat *jāgir* i.e. land) or *nokari garna jāne* (literary meaning to work as servants) to talk about the movement of men and women who went to work in professional or semi-professional jobs. The terms *jāgir* and *nokari* covered the jobs that were more or less permanent, or in some cases temporary but ensured a degree of job security and ensured regular payment. Mostly the term *jāgir* was used to talk about civilian jobs within Nepal. However, it was also used to talk about anyone working within or outside of Nepal and some *lāhures* were also known as *jāgires*. The term *jāgir* was a form of land assignment in return for state service, which was a common means of payment to soldiers in the Nepali army in the 19th century. Though these days those who were employed by the state or private agencies did not get paid in the form of land, most of them used the salary to purchase land which signified their particular relation to the state as servants. At the same time, a few people from outside the village were employed in the village in the school, health post and village administration.

History and destination

Movement for salaried employment was at least as old as the state of Nepal itself. Bahun men from Yamgha went to work for the state in different parts of Nepal, mainly as teachers and lower ranking civil servants. Those who were educated in

Banaras or Tansen were quickly able to find salaried employment with the state departments. The Magars went to work in the army and police, and some of them went to work as low ranking workers. Though few in number, as long as the eldest member in the village could remember the movement for taking up salaried employment has long existed in the area. In the earlier days, it was mainly the government that provided salaried employment, whereas recently people are increasingly employed in private firms, non-governmental agencies and industries. The competition for salaried employment had meant that only a few individuals were able to succeed and the rest had to look for other forms of work.

Frequency and the background

The household survey showed that 18 individuals, comprising 15 Bahuns and 3 Magars, had moved out of the village for salaried employment in different parts of Nepal. When this number was viewed from the gender perspective, only three women were employed compared to 15 men. These figures did not accurately reflect the exact number of people who went for salaried employment as some of those who found salaried employment shifted their settlement from the village to a new destination.

There was a clear relationship between ethnicity and involvement in salaried employment. For instance, civil service, teaching and other forms of salaried employment in the private sector within Nepal were exclusively found among the Bahuns, whereas service in the army and police was more common among the Magars. Likewise, among the three women, one of them was employed as a teacher and two as nurses.

Decision making and organisation

To have someone employed was a matter of great pride and prestige for the entire household, which determined the location of the household in the socio-economic and moral hierarchy in the village. The income from a regular salary played a significant role in the upward socio-economic mobility of these *jāgire* individuals and their households. More importantly, it was the security of consistent income that

was highly valued by the households. From the perspective of the *jāgire* individuals, it was a matter of great pride to have found employment and earn respect among friends and relatives.

Having someone employed opened up new possibilities for the household, including facilitating the education of other members or helping other members of the family to find employment in the cities through newly established networks. The elder members in the household considered that it was the responsibility of the *jāgire* member to 'do something' (*kehi gardine*) usually for the younger members like brother/nephew (*bhāi/bhātijā*) in the household or other close relatives.

Jāgir khāne was so important to the life in the village that the parents of girls would particularly look for a *jāgire* to marry their daughter. The first inquiry made by the parents of the girl would be 'whether the man was employed or not'. Only when the parents knew that the person had employment would they inquire about the type of employment. A good job meant that the household was able to arrange a marriage with the girl of their choice.

Bahun children were brought up with a strict discipline, closely supervised education and a high inspiration for employment in the civil service. Accordingly, Bahuns displayed a high aspiration to find employment in the civil service, private sector or teaching whereas the Magars displayed aspiration for employment in the Army or police service. The former required a high level of education, while the latter did not require a higher level of education. This regulated the access to different forms of salaried employment along ethnic lines. This practice of socialisation eventually prepared some of the individuals from these groups to take up salaried employment accordingly.

Finding employment was extremely difficult as it involved hard work, apart from a good educational background. After completing their education in cities like Tansen and Kathmandu, most young Bahuns extended their stay until they managed to find some work. Commonly known as *jāgir khojne*, the process of finding jobs was

extremely difficult and did not always result in salaried employment. For many it resulted in repeated frustration. In cases where they could not manage to find employment within Nepal, many of them went to work in the Gulf or the South East Asian countries.

I met several students studying in the university and colleges in Kathmandu and Tansen who wanted to see their education leading to salaried employment and none of them were interested in going back to the village without securing salaried employment. The value of university education was viewed in relation to its potential to provide salaried employment opportunities. As most of their education was funded by the families in the village, these young men found it very difficult to ask for money from their family as soon as their study came to an end, and there was a sense of urgency to find employment so that they could manage to stay in the city without being dependent on their household. Due to stiff competition for jobs, it was common to see a large number of men and women desperately looking for employment after the completion of their studies. Many of them did not want to be seen as *phāltu*[74] but rather preferred to work in any form of employment that they could find. Many of them worked on underpaid jobs, mostly as teachers and tutors in private boarding schools and tuition centres, which was not even enough to manage their day to day expenses. They continued to work with the hope that they would be able to find a better job some day. Many of them had no other choice but to continue asking for money from their parents/brothers until they found a job. In the meantime, a few of them found it difficult to be seen as unemployed but rather found it better to enrol in one course after another in the English language or computing skills.

Those looking for posts needed to respond to jobs advertised in the newspapers by sending out a series of applications and looking for s*ource force*[75]. It was common to see them browsing through newspapers to look for a suitable vacancy. One man aged 31 told me that he had spent thousands of rupees in taking print outs of

[74] Useless; it was used by unemployed men to talk about their state.
[75] It referred to a kin network for recommendation, which was needed for finding a job. It was also called *bhānsun*.

applications, preparing his *bio-data* and sending out application letters by post. After applying for jobs, most of them were never called for interview, which they thought was because of a lack of a recommendation. A job was always possible with a recommendation from an influential person (usually a politician, senior bureaucrat or other influential personality). These men judged whether a recommendation from a particular person was strong enough or not. Before applying for jobs, these men would often ask if they could find the right channel to get their message across. Men I spoke to believed that it was important to pay a bribe to find a job. While some developed connections using their kinship network in the city, others developed connections using friendship or a political affiliation developed in the university.

Time span and contact

Those who got permanent salaried employment worked till they retired from the job, mostly at the age of 58 or 60. For those who were in temporary jobs, the time span varied; they worked for a few years in one place and found another job thereafter. The *jāgire* spent most of their time away from home. Depending on the nature of the job, some of them were posted to one place for life, while others moved to different places as required by the jobs. Only a few found jobs close to their home and some of them who found a salaried job in Tansen preferred to commute on a daily basis.

The concept of home was very important for those employed in cities such as Kathmandu and Tansen. When asked about their home, almost all of them referred to the name of the village and district they originally came from. Some of the employed people came home regularly throughout the year, while others returned to the village during *dasaĩ*[76] or some other significant events in the family. Similarly, the household members from the village visited *jāgire* occasionally. The employed members had the responsibility of sending money back to their household and this was one of the significant means of keeping in touch with the household in the village.

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[76] The festival held on the tenth day of the light fortnight of the month Asvin (September/October) in honour of goddess Durgā.

From the perspective of the employed men, it was a very important responsibility to send money regularly to the household. Those who did not send money were considered irresponsible and morally wrong. The 'responsibility to look after the household' (*ghar herne*) meant that the employed men sent money regularly and visited home regularly. Almost all the *jāgire* had sent remittances on a regular basis, except for one married man who stopped sending money after he allegedly married another girl in Kathmandu. Unlike for men, the employed Bahun women did not have such an obligation to send money back home, as the parents did not think that it was morally correct for them to accept the earnings of their daughters. Despite this, all the three women had been sending money home.

Impact

The employed member of the household enjoyed more autonomy in their marriage or in other decisions. In an interview, the parents of one unmarried employed girl told me, 'Our daughter is employed as a nurse in Kathmandu. She is doing well. We don't know what type of boy we would like for marriage. We can't say anything, can we?' (Interview, 18 September 2004) There was one Bahun man who had married in the village but there was a rumour in the village that after he went to Kathmandu to work he had married another girl from a different caste. This form of freedom would have been almost impossible for him in the village. When I met this man, who was teaching in a private boarding school in Kathmand, he told me that he had met his new wife at his work place and got married without informing his parents. He told me that despite his insistence to marry an educated girl with some prospects for employment, he had got married to his first wife after pressure from his parents who wanted a daughter in law to help them with household chores. From his perspective, it was important to get married to his new wife, who was educated and had secure employment in the same school. (Interview, 16 December 2004) There were several other employed men and women who had got married without the consent of their parents with someone from another caste, a different family background and often from a different geographic area, opening up new kinship networks. Having secured employment enabled many men and women to make decisions about their life on their own and in many cases reject the social norms practised in the village.

Life in Kathmandu

Having moved to take up employment in cities like Kathmandu, village men and women went through a transformation. Employed women in Kathmandu showed more autonomy than their counterparts in the village, which was obvious in their mobility for employment in the city. They were seen as part of a liberal environment, offered by city life, where they earned money and in many the cases supported their family back home. A few women I met told me that they had a say in the choice of their groom.

Most of the Bahun men I met during my fieldwork followed a radically different way of life from their counterparts left back in the village. Several of them consumed alcohol, abandoned wearing *janaï* [77], visited cabin restaurants and dance bars[78], ate *momo*[79] made from buffalo meat and started love affairs and/or married girls from a different caste. The Bahun men were under constant pressure to adopt a modern way of life, while at the same time were conscious of their identity as a priestly caste. This was very much reflected in the consumption of alcohol among the employed Bahuns. One Bahun man (aged 31), employed as an accountant in a private firm, classified alcohol into two different types and told me that he drank branded beer or other branded liquor available in the shops but did not drink *raksi*, the traditional local liquor. (Interview, 7 May 2005) This pattern was quite common among many other employed Bahuns, who consumed branded alcohol (beer, wine, vodka, whisky, rum, wine and brandy) but did not consume the local alcohol (*raksi*). Those who drank branded alcohol did not call it *raksi* but rather took the specific type or the name of the alcohol. To these Bahuns, branded alcohol, which they found easily in the city but not in their village was modern, but they kept themselves distant from *raksi* as it was a traditional alcohol consumed by lower castes or other ethnic groups in their village. Most of these Bahuns did not drink alcohol when they went back to

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[77] Sacred thread; it is mainly worn by Bahuns and Chetris. It has a symbolic importance for asserting ritual purity among Bahuns and Chetris.

[78] People visiting the cabin restaurants and dance bars are looked down upon morally as it is believed that these function as brothels.

[79] Dumpling; it was an important snacks among Kathmanduties, mostly among the young and working people.

their village; neither did they consume alcohol when any family member or close relative from the village visited them in the city. Except for a few, most of the young Bahuns told me that they did not like the idea of 'wearing sacred thread' as they did not follow the strict ritual and discipline that they were supposed to observe in the village. One Bahun said, 'I think it is useless to wear sacred thread here in Kathmandu. We eat in hotels; the food is cooked by anyone. We need *momo*. It is not possible to live like a Bahun here. Nobody really cares.' (Interview, 16 December 2004) Another Bahun told me that he did not like the idea of wearing sacred thread, except for few days after *janaï purnimā*[80], as it often fell off his arm which led to humiliation. He preferred to take the sacred thread out in his wallet or keep it around his waist. He and many others told me that it was important to wear it when they went back home, especially during festivals and ceremonies where it would be visible to others. Such strategic behaviour made it possible for them to adopt a modern way of life, without compromising their priestly identity. The Bahuns I met maintained a dual identity as liberal Bahuns in the city, while still maintaining their orthodox identity as a pure priestly caste back in the village. These employed Bahuns believed that it was important for them change with the times but still found it difficult to practise their liberal way of life when they visited their home. In his paper on commodification of food and sex among middle class in Kathmandu, Liechty writes, 'Urban Nepalis shift between class bodies and caste bodies as they move through a varied cultural landscape in which different socio-moral logics produce or demand different ways of being' (Liechty, 2005: 4). He makes a link between changing attitude against alcohol and buffalo meat (*momo*) among upper caste men and the rise of public eating and restaurant in Kathmandu.

In Kathmandu the Bahuns were more concerned about doing well in their jobs, earning money and adopting a modern way of life to enable them to climb the socio-economic ladder. Unlike Magars and other ethnic groups, the *jāgire* Bahuns in Kathmandu were not organized as a collective group except for some of them who took part in regional associations (for e.g.: Palpali Sangam) or societies based on

[80] the day of religious significance when new sacred thread is put every year.

their *thar* (patronymic) such as—Gautam Samaj, Adhikari Samaj, Lamsal Samaj and so on. Responding to the anti-Bahun sentiment in the ethnic discourse in the university where he works, a Bahun lecturer in Kathmandu told me, 'I think Bahuns are being made scapegoats for nothing. People have invented the term *bāhunism* (*bāhunbād*). Now some people are talking about a reservation system like in India. I think it's time that Bahuns came together to do something about it. But Bahuns do not get along very well with each other.' (Interview, 9 May 2005) Unlike Bahuns, the Magars I met were conscious of their identity as Magar and took part in many of the activities organized by the Magar association in Kathmandu. Almost all the employed Magars I met in Kathmandu were members of the Magar association.

Bidesh Tira Jāne

The term *bidesh tira jāne* was used to talk about movement to foreign countries to find work, to study or for other reasons. The term *bidesh tira jāne* was also used to talk about the *lāhures* who went to work in different countries. People often used the name of the foreign country to talk about this form of population mobility. For instance, it was common among the people in the village to use the term *Qatar gayeko* (meaning went to Qatar), *Saudi gayeko* (meaning went to Saudi Arabia) or *Arab gayeko* (went to some Arabian county). People went abroad mainly to find work as labourers both through legal and illegal means and both with the help of their kin already in the destination and/or through a manpower agency.

As I indicated earlier, Seddon and colleagues in their study on foreign labour migration and the remittance economy of Nepal use the term *New Lāhure* to talk about the new wave of foreign labour migrants who go to work in different counties (Seddon et al., 2001). They have argued that foreign labour migration from Nepal has contributed significantly to the Nepalese economy and the rural livelihoods. Increasingly the economists and other analysts have begun to understand that if there is anything that is keeping the Nepalese economy moving, it is the remittances sent by the Nepalis working in foreign countries. An estimate in 1997 showed that the value of remittances from foreign labour migration (excluding India) amounted to

between 25 and 30 billion Nepalese rupees, or between US$450 million and US$500 million.

History and destination

Apart from a long history of work in a foreign army and manual work in India that started in early 19th century, the practice of *bidesh tira jāne* emerged as a major feature of Nepal's economy and society from the beginning of 1990 (Seddon et al., 2002). In 1985, the government introduced the Labour Act to regulate migration for work to about a dozen countries. The Act banned recruitment of Nepalis without government permission. A large number of people from Yamgha began to go to different foreign countries, particularly after 1995.

The term *bidesh* meant foreign countries other than India but in terms of practice and possibility for the people in Yamgha, it meant a few countries in South East Asia (Hong Kong, Malaysia and Korea) and the Gulf (Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait among others) except for one *lāhure* and his wife who now lived in the United Kingdom. While people in Yamgha did talk about movements to countries like the United Kingdom, Europe, Japan, Australia, United States and Canada, they considered that those destinations were out of their reach due to a lack of social network and financial resources. People believed that movement to these countries demanded more money and know-how, and considered that it was quite impossible for them. In Kathmandu the men planning to migrate often told that it would cost anywhere between 800,000 to 1.5 million Nepali Rupees (approximately £6,000 to £10,000) to go to Europe and North America through illegal means. Post-war Iraq emerged as an important destination in recent years, though it was illegal to go to Iraq to work. Comparatively the income opportunities were better in the reconstruction phase in Iraq than in other countries in the Gulf. The absence of bilateral ties and a worsening security situation in Iraq had meant that the government of Nepal had not opened up employment opportunities to Iraq. The implication of this was seen in the strategies used by the people to go to Iraq through various informal and illegal channels. The killing of 12 Nepali workers in Iraq in

August/September 2004 showed the risks Nepalis were taking to work in Iraq.[81] However, except for a few months from the event, it did not lead to decrease in the number of men going to work in Iraq illegally.

Frequency and background

The household survey showed that the Gulf Countries (Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia) and the Southeast Asian Countries (Hong Kong and Malaysia) were popular destinations with just over 30 per cent (56) of the current absent population and about 15 per cent (10) of the total people who had returned. While I could not quantify the potential movers to these destinations, I met several men from the village who were preparing and planning to go to these countries for work.

The practice of going abroad for work was quite common among both Bahuns and Magars and relatively common across different socio-economic groups, except for the poorest households who could not afford it. However, a few poorer households had taken out a loan to arrange labour migration to the Gulf and Malaysia. Due to a relatively high salary and job security during the contract period, more men have now become attracted to this form of mobility, though it required a substantive investment compared to the village standard.

In terms of gender, it was mostly men who went to work overseas. I was able to find two women who had gone abroad, one of them accompanying her husband to the United Kingdom while the other one had gone to Hong Kong. Looking at the marital status of those who moved, most of them were found to be married at the time of the survey, while many of them were unmarried when they first moved. Education background of those who went abroad to work showed that all of them were literate, ranging from no formal school education at all to a Bachelor's degree. As almost all the people went for unskilled work, education was an advantage but it was not always needed. Despite the small number of women who went to work abroad, there was compelling popular talk in the village about the risk of women migration abroad.

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[81] Both the domestic and international media followed this incidence for over 10 days. Iraqi militants captured 12 Nepali workers around 20 August 2004, and finally killed them around 30-31 August 2004.

Following abuse and death of a Nepali woman named Kani Sherpa in Saudi Arabia on 9 November 1998, the Nepali state made direct attempts to protect migrant women from adverse domestic labour conditions and trafficking by means that risk inhibiting women's mobility (O'Neill, 2001, Joshi, 2001). Following the pressure from human rights organisations, the government finally gave permission in 2003 for women to work only in the formal sector, including department stores, supermarkets, factories and specific industries.

While there was no consistent data on the magnitude of foreign labour migration, it was estimated that about 700,000 Nepalis work in foreign counties, meaning beyond India, mainly in the Middle East and South East Asia (Seddon et al., 2002, Seddon et al., 2001). The exact number of Nepalis working abroad was very difficult to establish, given the increasing use of unofficial means to send workers abroad.

Decision making and organisation

One of the major reasons for going to work in foreign countries was because it opened up opportunities to accumulate wealth and possibilities for socio-economic mobility for the households. While it was not always possible for the households to accumulate wealth to ensure a significant rise in socio-economic status through this movement, it nonetheless provided a source of cash income which the other households lacked. At the same time it offered prestige compared to those left back. Moreover, it provided experience and knowledge of the wider world and a distant culture. At the same time, it was certainly an escape for the people who did not find opportunities for employment within the country. For the young men, it provided an opportunity to be independent. In the last few years, this had emerged as a very popular choice among the young men in the village. Many young men considered that it was simply the thing to do.

The salary in these counties differed (NRs 7000 to 20,000 or more in exceptional cases) based on the work available, which was again based on the use of social networks to find the better job opportunities through manpower agencies in Kathmandu. I was told by informants that many people were promised a high salary

but they were not paid as promised. They felt cheated. People working in Malaysia said that they had to pay a levy to the government there, which meant that they were able to save very little.

The remittances sent went to pay for the loan, household subsistence, including children's education, marriage and if someone was able to save money, he/she invested that money outside of the village in property, which in turn facilitated the shifting of the settlement from the village. In terms of the economics, such movement would not always be rewarding as it required a lot of money from the village, often with high interest, to pay for the airfare and the manpower agency. Very few households had been able to raise their economic situation with the remittances sent from abroad. While it did not drastically change the household economic situation, it nonetheless sustained the household.

Everyday conversation in the village tea shops, *bhatti*[82] and *cautaro*[83] was centred on who went, who came, who was planning to go and through whom, who earned how much, who could not earn and who was sending money home and so on. I met several young men who shared their frustration at not being able 'to go' as their family was unable to afford the money. There was a young man who would mostly be seen playing on a carom board outside the village tea shop from morning till evening. He seemed quite frustrated and did not talk to his father as the latter had not been able to arrange money for his movement to the Gulf, when all of his friends had left to go to different foreign countries. His father too was quite worried at not being able to fulfil the desire of his son. The father told me that he had been working hard to arrange for money but it had not worked out so far. Among the young men, aspiration to go to abroad was high as they saw it as the only option available to them to prove their identity as a man, improve their economic situation and plan their future life. Such movement offered a good escape for young educated men who otherwise felt very upset as they were not able to find work in line with their qualifications. It was popular both among the highly educated and not so educated.

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[82] local bar
[83] A plateform built of earth, plaster or brick for sitting on, erected under a big tree.

They told me that they would like to earn some money and do something. When asked, what that something was, they would say to get married, build a house in a city and start a small business.

Money was needed to go to work abroad. To go to work in the Gulf and South East Asian countries people needed to invest about NRs 80,000 to 100,000 to work as unskilled workers. This was no doubt a lot of money, given the village standard. For the poorer households, this amount was probably more than their total wealth. Even for the well off household, this amount was quite a lot as they often did not have cash. While some people sold property, others took loans from relatives, money lenders or banks. From the perspective of both the sending households and the mover, it was considered an investment which could lead to betterment in their life. While the households arranged money and made the movement of one or two individual men possible, the movers were left with a responsibility towards their household members.

While money was very important to arrange for the movement, it was the experience and support provided by the returnee kin that was instrumental in the movement of the others. The experienced and knowledgeable kin helped the hopeful individual by providing information and other necessary support in arranging the movement. People went to work abroad officially, through registered manpower agencies, and unofficially through individual brokers or their kin.

I met four men who were actively preparing to go abroad to work, often travelling to Tansen and Kathmandu to meet the manpower agencies and preparing the necessary documents. Eventually they left for Qatar and Malaysia.

An important official step in arranging movement abroad was the passport. Young men from the village, who would otherwise not need a passport, were seen queuing in the District Administrative Office (DAO) for their passports that cost Nepali Rupees 5000. Prior to 1997, passports were issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kathmandu and people who needed a passport were required to visit Kathmandu

with the necessary documents for a minimum of 6-8 days or more, which involved a huge cost. The booming export of manpower overseas in the 1990s led the government to decentralize the policy on issuing passports and now people could get a passport from the District Administration Office (DAO) in Tansen. A clerk who worked at the passport section in the DAO told me that every day more than 20-30 people sought passports from the DAO. Organizing a passport was not an easy task as they were often asked for a bribe. While none of the people I interviewed said that they had to a pay bribe, they believed that other people had to bribe to get a passport. After the passport was issued, the next step was to find a reliable manpower agency who could arrange a job abroad. Social networks played an important role in finding a reliable and trustworthy manpower agency. Depending on the contact and trust that one could establish, the preparation itself took several months. While some were able to fly within two months, it took more than a year for others.

As most of the migration to the Gulf and South East Asia took place through manpower agencies based in Kathmandu, the interested individuals travelled to Kathmandu with an experienced and/or knowledgeable kinsman to approach the 'reliable' and 'trustworthy' (*bharpardo, biswāsilo, nathagne*) manpower agencies. In some other cases, the men in the village were initially approached by the agents of manpower agencies with an attractive offer. The agents could be the kin of the potential mover or would approach the potential mover through kin or directly. Three such agents I met during my fieldwork in Palpa told me that they would get paid NRs 5000- NRs 15,000 for each successful person from the manpower agencies. There were several individuals working as agents in and around Tansen.

One very popular manpower agent was a former member of parliament, who lived in Tansen, who was well known for arranging migration to different foreign destinations including Europe. There were rumours that this agent was earning a lot of money by sending people abroad. Earlier a very popular politician, he now gave very little time to politics but was busy with his new enterprises. One of his neighbours in Tansen commented, 'His house has always been busy with visitors; earlier with his party cadre, now with his clients'. He was always travelling between

Tansen and Kathmandu with a small bag, which contained documents and passports. It is believed that he has sent more than 500 people since he started this work in 2001. I met two young boys who had been visiting him for the last two months, whose movement was being arranged to go to Europe at a cost of NRs 700,000 each. The other agent was a relative of a clerk at a manpower agency in Kathmandu. He had been arranging movement for a few people from Yamgha and surrounding areas. The other was a returnee from Qatar, who lived in the village, and took a group of men to his contact for a manpower agency in Kathmandu. Later in Kathmandu, I learned that manpower agencies kept a few staff whose sole work was to find potential clients from different rural areas.

People with good contacts, mostly with some influence, were seen as very effective in getting a large number of clients. Most of the movement to the Gulf/South East Asia took place through manpower agencies based in Kathmandu, the experienced and/or knowledgeable kin played an important role in the arrangement of the movement. Contrary to the popular perception of such agents as exploiters, from the perspective of the movers I spoke to, the agent played a crucial role in making one's movement successful. They were aware that the agents took money from the manpower agency but it was mostly viewed as remuneration for their work.

While manpower agencies were the major agents who arranged labour export, in the case of the Gulf countries, a few people were sent visas by their kin who were already working in those countries. Commonly known as *visit mā*, relatives/family members already working in a foreign country sent a 'visiting visa' which enabled someone to go without paying a high fee to the manpower agencies and avoided the risk of being cheated by the manpower agencies. To avoid the official screening process of immigration in Nepal, many of those who went on a visiting visa went via Delhi or Mumbai in India. The reason for flying from India was that the Nepali immigration did not allow them to travel with a 'visiting visa' as they would not have contracts of employment. While it was possible to go through immigration by paying about NRs 10,000-15,000 through an agent, many chose not to take the risk but rather chose to travel via India. Immigration officials in Nepal did not allow people

to travel on a visiting visa as they would not believe that a Nepali would only be going to visit the Gulf countries. The maltreatment of Nepali workers abroad, highlighted in the media, has put more pressure on the government to put strict regulations on immigration. Despite all this, it was possible to avoid such screening when one travelled through India. A man first went to Qatar through a manpower agency by paying NRs 75,000 in 2001, and retuned in 2004. After spending about a year in Nepal, he again planned to go to Dubai. This time his strategy was not to go through a manpower agency in Kathmandu by paying a lot of money, but rather he planned to go on a 'visiting visa' that his brother-in-law already working in Dubai had sent him by fax. The visiting visa allowed a relative or a friend to come and visit for a maximum of six months, but work was not allowed. The strategy was to reach the destination using the visiting visa and then arrange a work contract through local agents there. From his perspective, the visiting visa meant that he had to pay only for his air fare and he could find a better job there as compared to what the manpower agencies offered. Eventually, he went to Dubai via Delhi and avoided possible problems with immigration in Kathmandu Airport. Several Nepali men and women I met in Mumbai who were preparing to fly to Dubai and Saudi Arabia told me that it was easier and cheaper to arrange their movement through India rather than through Nepal. Several manpower agencies both in Nepal and India with the help of several agents organized such movement for a few Nepalis through India illegally. This was very common while sending people to countries like Iraq.

As indicated earlier, it was the capture of 12 Nepali men by a Muslim militant organisation in Iraq, which grabbed the attention of the world media both within Nepal and outside. Within 10 days of the video of the capture, there was a violent video clipping circulating on the web, which showed the killing of the 12 Nepalis working to Iraq. In the light of the fact that the government had never opened up employment in Iraq due to the 'poor security situation' and the lack of diplomatic ties, subsequent revelations showed that several individuals and manpower agencies were involved This incident led to a severe riot in Kathmandu in the first week of

September in 2004.[84] Several manpower agencies and travel agencies, airlines offices and media houses in Kathmandu were destroyed and burnt; the central mosque in the centre of the city was destroyed. For the first time in the history of Nepal, there was a threat of explicit religious violence in Kathmandu. Following this, there was severe pressure on the government to be more vigilant in matters related to people going abroad to work. The media continued to carry several stories of exploitation of the 'innocent Nepalis' who went to work abroad. Following the news that several Nepalis were waiting to fly to different countries, including Iraq, and several of them had been abandoned by manpower agents in Delhi and Mumbai, the government and a few NGOs involved themselves in a rescue. It was discussed on the media as a matter of national shame.

Since 1990, sending Nepali workers abroad had emerged as a growing private sector enterprise in Nepal with the growth of hundreds of manpower agencies. These manpower agencies played a crucial role in shaping the scenario of foreign labour export from Nepal. According to Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies (NAFEA), there were more than 500 registered manpower agencies in Nepal, and it was believed that many more manpower agencies and individual brokers were unregistered. Several of these manpower agencies had branches in other cities like Pokhara and Butwal. While some of these manpower agencies specialized in the Gulf countries, others specialized in Malaysia, or both. There were allegations in the media and among the people in the village that several of these agencies illegally sent many people to other destinations. The growth and proliferation of manpower agencies was so intense that it was almost impossible to see any major street in Kathmandu without the office of a manpower agency. While some manpower agencies were big, housed in more than one building and well furnished; other manpower agencies were managed in two small rooms. The proliferation of manpower agencies for foreign employment was seen by the number of advertisements printed in the daily newspapers. A substantial amount of advertisement in the newspapers was borne by them. Manpower agencies had an

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[84] Both the domestic and international media reported on the riot in Kathmandu for about a 8-10 days (31 August 2004 onwards).

association, and the association was seen quite influential in putting forward its enterprises.

Time span and contact

In the main, people went abroad for a few years to work and returned home at the end of the contract. Thus it was mostly temporary in nature. As most of the legal working arrangement was based on a contract, the person was expected to return home at the termination of the contract, usually after 3 years. Depending on the experience and the decision made by the household, the returnee either decided to stay home or went abroad again on a new contract. The visa to these counties was usually issued for 3 years and in most cases these migrants came home only at the end of their visa, while some left early as they could not cope with the work or due to family problems back at home. The deteriorating health of his wife meant that a man had to return twice from Kuwait. Therefore, he was unable to earn money as planned and this frequent unplanned travel led to an increase in the household loan. Repeated movement was evident in that the people came home after their contract was over but went back again after a year or two to the same or a different country. I met a man in his late 30s who went to Kuwait for three years when he was 35; came home and lived for almost 2 years and was planning to go to Dubai for 3 years. I met another man who had only returned from Saudi Arab for 20 days, and was already exploring ways to go to another country. Likewise a man went to Qatar for 2 years, but then decided to go to Dubai after staying at home for 2 years. It was almost impossible to stay longer in the Gulf countries due to strict laws while a few people were successful in extending their stay in Malaysia and Hong Kong.

During their time away, they maintained contact with home by writing letters, making phone calls and sending hand delivered letters (*hate khabar*) with a friend.

Bhāgne

Commonly known as *bhāgne*, a few adolescent boys left home as young as 12 years old without consulting their parents to go to different destinations in the *terāi* and

different cities in India.[85] As long as the eldest member in the village could remember, this remained a common practice in village life though I was repeatedly told that it had declined in recent years. Most of the adults and old men I interacted with in the village laughed when they recalled their own experiences of *bhāgne*. The Nepali men working in Mumbai told me that they left home with their friends or others without informing their parents when they were young and later found some work and extended their stay. Their account showed that it was a very common practice during the earlier days. While some adolescents continued to leave home without informing their parents, the frequency of *bhāgne* had reduced drastically in recent years. It was more common previously (till late 1980s) but now it was an exception among the adolescent boys. In recent years schooling had made a significant impact in reducing *bhāgne*. At the time of my fieldwork in Yamgha four boys were absent who left their home without informing or consulting their parents.

Children and adolescents were encouraged to go to school as it was widely believed that schooling opened up new prospects for social and economic mobility. Interaction with the parents and others in the village showed that it was not considered right for the adolescents to run away, which signified deviant behaviour (*bigranu*). The parents of these adolescent boys considered that it was a matter of shame (*lajmardo kurā*) for the family and they believed that their child must have run away under the influence of others (*aruko laha lahai ma lāgera gayeko*). They instead wanted their children to go to school and prepare themselves for better prospects; and schooling was thought to be the best option available. While schooling was more common and this led to reduction in *bhāgne* from the village, there was evidence that the pressure of schooling itself led to *bhāgne* among several adolescents. From the perspective of those involved, strict discipline, poor performance and corporal punishment in the school were the major reasons behind their mobility.

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[85] Similar practice is reported in Indian hills. See: BERREMAN, G. D. (1972) *Hindus of the Himalayas: Ethnography and Change,* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press.

In terms of their attitude towards childhood and the children, the Bahuns were more concerned about the discipline and control of their children. Among the Bahuns, the socialisation of children involved strict control with several disciplinary codes and punishment for deviant behaviour. Children were perceived as minors who would not be able to make their own decisions. For the adolescent Bahuns, *bhāgne* provided a good escape from the strict control of their parents and the school. All this meant that *bhāgne* was clearly understood as deviant behaviour among the Bahuns. Among the Magars, most of them displayed a more liberal attitude towards childhood and children when compared to Bahuns. While the Magar parents told me that they would like their children to get educated, they did not display the moral panic, like Bahuns, when children went away without consulting them. One Magar mother whose 13 year old son left home a few months previously told me that it was the choice of her son who could not do well in school and the only option available to him was to leave home and explore working opportunities. She heard that her son was working in Delhi and believed that he would be back in a few months, with or without money. (Interview, 25 September 2004) She did not feel shy to talk about her child. Among the Magars *bhāgne* was not always viewed as deviant.

An important aspect of running away behaviour was that it was gendered i.e. it was always performed by the adolescent male. Adolescent boys left home in small groups from the village, usually motivated and/or accompanied by some experienced men who worked in India or the *terāi*, who came to their village for holidays. In most of the cases, the adolescent boys either borrowed money from their friends or stole money from their parents which provided their travel expenses. In a few other cases, the experienced migrant financed the travel expenses and took them along and eventually found work for them. Those who were unaccompanied by experienced people usually took the address of some of their relatives or neighbours in the destination and lived with them once they reached there. After spending a few weeks in one or two cities, some of them returned home, while others continued to work and came home only after earning money. The adolescent boys usually sent letters or messages with someone with an apology for their behaviour. At home, the parents were usually worried about the absence of their children unless they knew

their whereabouts. Many of the Bahun parents went to look for their children or sent messages to the relatives working in the *terāi* or India, while others believed that their children would return in a few months time. From the perspective of the parents, it was important to find out whether their children went willingly with some people they knew or whether they had got lost. The biggest worry for the parents was to establish the fact whether their children were safe or not. While none of the children or adolescents were lost from the village, there were common rumours that strangers came to villages to take children away with the intention to sell children for their organs.

In Mumbai, I met a Magar boy, aged 14, who was working as a domestic servant in the flat of a middle class household in sub-urban Mumbai. He was mostly in the home, cleaning the house, shopping, washing dishes and clothes among other things. He got about an hour's free time in the evening that he spent in the tea shop where other Nepalis gathered. He had run away with two of his school friends about 10 months previously from a village in Palpa. They had travelled with a distant relative who had been working in Mumbai for the last 2-3 years. They were studying in a local school in the village until one day they decided to leave the village and travel to Mumbai. At the time he left the village he was studying in class 4 and was an average student in his class. According to him, it was common for school children in his village to run away to India to work. He had two brothers, both married who were working as manual workers in Delhi and two sisters recently married. His parents (about 60) were small farmers who managed their farm and worked as daily wage workers in the village. He recalled his father telling him that he worked in Delhi and Mumbai for more than 20 years while the children grew up. When they ran away none of them informed their parents about leaving home to go to Mumbai. However, their parents came to know about them as many other friends in the village knew about it. He sold the hen from home to cover the travel expenses. His distant relative who accompanied him found him this job where he was paid about IRs 1000 per month plus food and accommodation. He had already sent IRs 5000 to his parents through a man from his village. He planned to go home after a few months

and would decide at home if he wanted to continue working in Mumbai or continue his studies.

Likewise, a Bahun boy of 15 left home with a friend when he was 12. At that time his family was facing economic hardship and there were frequent quarrels at home so he decided to leave the family. He used the English word 'tension' and Nepali word *dikka lāgdo* to explain the situation in his family, which meant that he was sad and annoyed. At that time he was studying in class 6 and his father wanted him to finish his SLC (School Leaving Certificate) and then look for a *jāgir*. He knew that several men from his village were working in different cities in India and were earning money to contribute to the family. He too thought that by going to Delhi, he would be able to work and earn some money. He left for Delhi with a friend who arranged money for the travel. Both of them left the village in the early morning, took the bus to Bhairahawa and then to Delhi. The friend who accompanied him was 4-5 years older than him and he had been to India earlier with his uncle. After reaching Delhi, they went to a neighbour from their village who was working there and stayed with him. Within a week, the neighbour helped them to find a job in a shop and later in a hotel. After a month his friend left for home, but he continued to work there. Even after working for a year, he was not able to save money as he was paid only IRs 600 per month. Nonetheless he managed to take IRs 15,000 when he went home the last time. He went home for the first time in two years and remained for about 20 days. He then he continued to work in Mumbai in India and one of his brothers joined him recently. He worked as an assistant in an architect company in Mumbai which paid him IRs 4300. His family members were happy with him. He was able to send about IRs 20,000-30,000 home annually and seemed satisfied with his work.

Adolescent boys often went to the cities in the *terāi* and/or Indian cities to wander around, see different places, and engage in work and a few months later return home or continue work there. Though it did not necessarily lead to employment, it nonetheless provided a freedom and opened up economic opportunities for them if they chose to stay and work. The experiences of *bhāgne* showed that the boys left as minors but transformed themselves as adults when they returned home. The young

adolescents believed that it opened up avenues to see new place and explore opportunities for work. These adolescents heard about life in the cities through radio, returned migrants and through their school text books, which inspired them to explore new places and opportunities. They enjoyed the freedom and transformed themselves into more independent individuals when they were away from the strict control of their parents. Despite that, *bhāgne* was perceived as deviance in Bahun styles of masculinity, for the poor labouring households it proved important to their life. Many of them were able to save some money which contributed to the household income back home. The most important meaning of *bhāgne* was that it transformed the dependent adolescent boys into more independent adults.

Kām Garna Rākheko

A few of the poorer households sent their children (mostly aged 10-14) with someone they knew, mostly their relatives or someone from the village, to work as domestic helpers in the middle class families in towns and cities. In return, the children were mostly sent to schools and given free food and accommodation except for a few who were not sent to school. For a few of the poorer households, it was a good strategy to lessen the burden of the household and ensure that their children were getting free food, rent and schooling in the cities. Poverty (*garibi)* and 'not enough' (*napugera)* were the repeated answers given to me by a few parents when I asked them about why they kept their children in the cities.

The perception of the receiving households was mixed. A few households who kept domestic child workers in Kathmandu and Tansen considered the children as workers in exchange for the investment they made on them. Whereas, the other households considered this practice as positive for a better future of those children.

This practice of sending children away for domestic work was common both among the Bahun and Magar households. It was now more common than the earlier days. Earlier, children were sent to work as domestic workers in return for some material benefit for the household whereas this was replaced recently by sending the children

to school. In addition a few households were provided with money when they visited their children in the cities, for the bus fare. Contact with influential people (*thulo mānche)* in the cities in the middle class houses opened up opportunities to visit the cities and possibly seek employment opportunities for other members of the family. It was mostly organized through relatives or neighbours. Social networks were used by both the sending and the receiving families to make the arrangement and ensure the care and support of the children. The demand in the city was for loyal and hard working children who could provide domestic help without giving much trouble. While both younger male and female children were kept for work in the cities, neither the people in the village nor the receiver household in the city preferred to keep the older female children as it was not considered morally good. The household in return demanded a good employer household (*rāmro ghar pariwār*) who would look after the welfare of their children like their own (*chorā chori jhai garerā rākhne)* and find some opportunity for jobs once the child grew up.

These children were mostly seen in the middle class families in Tansen, and Kathmandu. They were easily identified by the clothes that they wore which was mostly larger than their size. They were seen often carrying vegetables or milk from the local shop. Apart from going to school, they spent their time inside the compound of their house while a few of them took sometime out to play in the neighbourhood. While a few of them had friends in the neighbourhood with other children working as domestic helpers, most of them did not have any friends. They were not encouraged to be absent for long hours or interact with the neighbours. These children were often expected not to be seen in front of the guests and when the family members were discussing family matters. They were often called by their name or the common name *kancha/kanchi* (small boy/small girl), or *keta/keti* (boy/girl) for work. They responded to these calls and did the work according to the instructions given to them by nodding their head. These children were yelled if they were unable to do the work as demanded by the members of the employer household. Depending on the caste background and cooking skills, some of them did all the cooking or helped in cooking, and worked solely on the cleaning, supervised mostly by the mother of the households. The days began as early as 5am to clean the floor

and attend to the water tap and ended with sleep after cleaning the dishes at around 10pm. They often slept in the kitchen/dinning room floor, a small space under the stairs or in the corridor of the house. Watching television or other forms of entertainment was not very common among these children, unless they were instructed to play with the children of the household they lived with.

Tīrtha Jāne

The important role that religion plays in the life of the people was seen in the number of people who travelled on pilgrimage to different sacred places. In the day-to-day conversation people used the phrases—*tīrtha jāne* and/or *dharma karma garna jāne*—to talk about a journey taken for religious reasons to different sacred sites. For some, pilgrimage involved only a relatively short distance and short term movement to a local shrine or religious centre while for others it involved a long distance and long term movement to distant places. A few old Bahun widows from the village had left their family and were living in a religious site (close to the holy river) waiting for death, an important means of obtaining *mukti* (salvation). This practice was not seen among Magar widows.

From the perspective of the Bahun sons, it was important that they were able to arrange a pilgrimage for their parents. This was considered a duty for a good son. From the perspective of the Bahun parents, it was important to have at least one son who would take the parents on a pilgrimage in their old age.

The Bahuns in the study area went for both short distance and long distance pilgrimages to different parts of Nepal and India; whereas the Magars went for short distance pilgrimages to local shrines and religious centres. To the Bahuns, *tīrtha* formed an important part of their identity as the dominant Hindu caste group. The pilgrimage sites included popular temples, confluence of rivers and other sacred sites.[86]

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[86] The table 5.6 presents the major pilgrimage sites visited by the people in Yamgha.

Among the Bahuns, *tīrtha* formed an important subject of discussion among the middle aged and ageing population. The discussion centred on the stories and miracles people told from their visit to different sacred sites. The important topics of discussion involved the meeting of people from other cultures, the experience of travels, weather, food and stories/miracles.

The journey to religious destinations both within and outside of Nepal (i.e. India) was believed to lead towards a complete and satisfying life. Among the high caste Bahuns, it was important to go for *tīrtha* once in one's life, which was a testimony to their purity and religious orientation. Visiting certain religious sites, mostly short distance, was equally important among the Magars as it was part of their life cycle. It exposed the people to others who came from different parts and made them more knowledgeable about new places and new people. People went on pilgrimages for different reasons, such as the fulfilment of a vow, to maintain health, wealth and happiness and reaffirmation of one's faith. Also major events in the life of the family members required the people to visit religious centres and sacrifice animals and/or host some feasts as a charity. Significant events like the birth of a child (mainly male), marriage and significant success in the fortune of the household led to a visit to some of the religious sites for prayer.

Pilgrimage was considered very much a ritual; it was regular part of one's life. It was considered a very good experience in one's life. Bahun elders evaluated their life in terms of whether they were able to go to important religious sites or not. Often people in Yamgha went on pilgrimage following consultation with a Shaman (*jhākri)* or priest (*pundit* or *jyotisī)* who would advise them to go to particular religious sites for worship often to terminate suffering and/or explore luck. Older Bahuns believed that visiting particular religious sites led to happiness and success in one's life. They often made requests and when they materialized they went to the particular religious site and sacrificed an animal or bird. For some pilgrimage offered an important opportunity to see the place and the temple while others went to give to charity so as to attain *mukti* and attain credit towards the next life.

Tīrtha involved good practice like fasting or eating pure (*shuddha/chokho)* food, offering charity and avoiding all forms of comfort. For Bahuns, an important aspect of most of the *tīrtha* was that they involved themselves in devotional songs i.e. *bhajan* and *kirtan*. A few Bahuns I spoke to believed that it was important to go on pilgrimage which gave some moral capital to be known as a good and honest human being. It was also believed that by going on pilgrimage, one would be able to do away with sin committed in life and attain salvation. Pointing to the people who went frequently for pilgrimages i.e. mostly the well-off, people often made jokes about them saying, 'those who committed more sin go to clean their sin'.

Based on the interaction with the households, the table 5.6 presents the major sacred sites visited by the people in the area.

Conclusion

In this chapter I introduced different forms of mobility as evaluated and categorized by the people themselves that differed from official categories and typologies of migration. While it was possible to discuss all the different forms of mobility in this chapter, I summarized their major features in the table attached (See table 5.1) that highlighted the similarities and differences in them. Exploring the different forms of human mobility together as categorized by the people themselves provided us with evidence to challenge the bounded, immobile and sedentary assumptions on hill people's livelihoods. Examining mobility from the people's perspective allowed one to contribute to the field of migration studies from a socio-cultural perspective. In the next chapter, I will explain the socio-cultural understanding of mobility by discussing a particular form of mobility i.e. *India tira jāne* in detail.

Table 5.6
Major pilgrimage site visited by the people in Yamgha

Locale	Description
Bhagwatisthan	Goddess Bhagwati or Durga Temple in Tansen; takes about 3-4 hours walk; both Bahuns and Magar visit; mostly visited during Navratri in *dasaĩ* and on Saturdays; animals are sacrificed.
Bhairabsthan	God Bhairab's temple in western Palpa; walk to Tansen and then takes about an hour by bus or walk for two hours; both Bahuns and Magars visit; Magars take Panchabali (sacrifice of five animals) on special occasions; visited on Tuesdays and Fridays; visited throughout the year; very popular for sacrificing animals
Rambhadevi	God Krishna's temple; located in eastern Palpa, takes about 5-6 hours walk, visited by Bahuns and some Magars on Krishna Janmastami (birthday of lord Krishna); there is a big fair in the place; people make vows.
Satyawati Mai	Goddess Satyawati; visited once in a year and on special occasions; located in South of Palpa (4 hours walk from Siddhartha highway between Butwal and Palpa); both Bahuns and Magars visit; very popular on special occasions; make vow; people stayed overnight.
Ramdi	Confluence of Kali-gandaki river; located in Siddhartha Highway, takes about 2 hours walk from the village; visited throughout the year on *ekādashi*; people to go take a bath in the holy river; few old widows from the village have settled there; Bahuns perform a few life cycle practices.
Ridi	Confluence of Kali-gandaki river; located about 25 kilometres from Tansen (about 2 hours by bus); both Bahuns and Magars visit on Maghe Sakranti big fare (*melā*) on that day; one old widow from the village has settled there; Bahuns visit on *ekādashi* and for other life cycle practices; people stayed overnight.
Ranighat	Confluence of Kali-gandaki river; located about 1-2 hours from the village; Bahuns visit to take bath in the holy river; Bahuns visit on *ekādashi* and for other life cycles practices.
Outside of Palpa in Nepal	
Pasupatinath	Located in Kathmandu; very popular *tīrtha* the Bahuns and other Hindus; few Magars visited; considered to be holy; takes one day by bus from Tansen; people mainly visited through the help of the relatives/family members in Kathmandu
Muktinath	Located in the northern Himalaya of Nepal, God Shiva: the god of salvation, one of the very important *tīrtha* for the Bahuns.
Janakpurdham	Bahuns visited; located in eastern *terāi*; an important site where Sita (Goddess) came from and got married to Ram or Rama.
Treveni	Narayani river, close to the Indian border in Uttar Pradesh, Bahuns went to take a bath in the holy river, widows went to live there till they died.

Devghat	Confluence of Kali Gandaki and Trisuli rivers making Saptagandaki (Narayani),
India	
Gaya/Banaras	Very popular sacred site; people went to take bath, visit various sacred sites; perform rituals (*vratabandha, srāddā, tarpan* etc); some widows settled themselves
Hardwar	A sacred site in Uttarakhand in India; visited by a few Bahuns
Badrinath/ Kedarnath	A sacred site in Uttarakhand in India; visited by a few Bahuns
Dwarka	A sacred site in south India; only a few Bahuns visited there; it involved being absent for a few weeks.
Saibaba	Very few people have been there; it is emerged as a recent pilgrimage; rumours were popular about the miracle; people went for treatment of their disease.

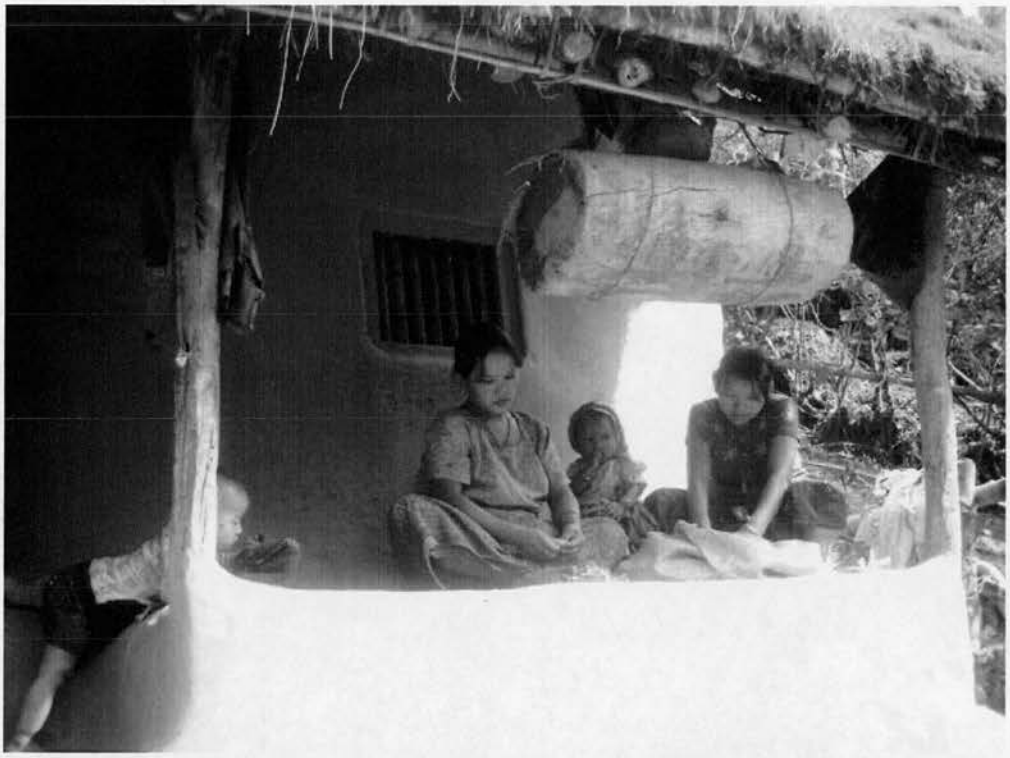

Plate 5.1 Two women and children at their home in the village while their husbands were working in India, Yamgha, Palpa

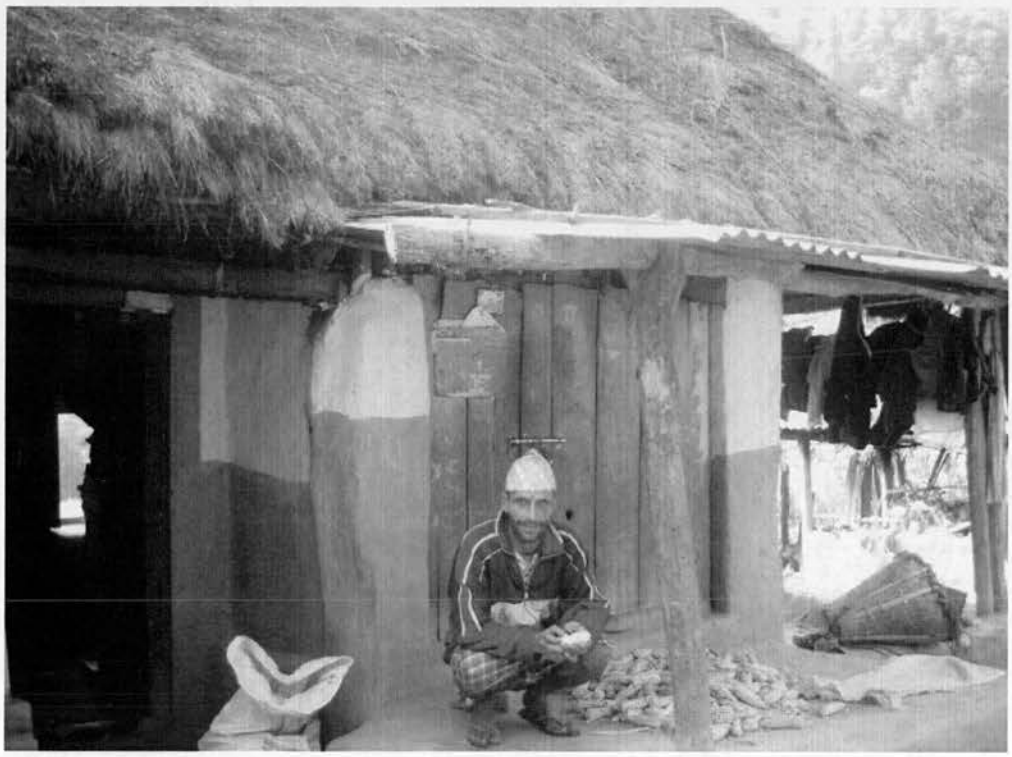

Plate 5.2 Jiba Lal having been to India and Kuwait, plans to go to Qatar, Yamgha, Palpa

Plate 5.3 Kamala and children at home in the village, her husband was in Saudi Arabia, Yamgha, Palpa

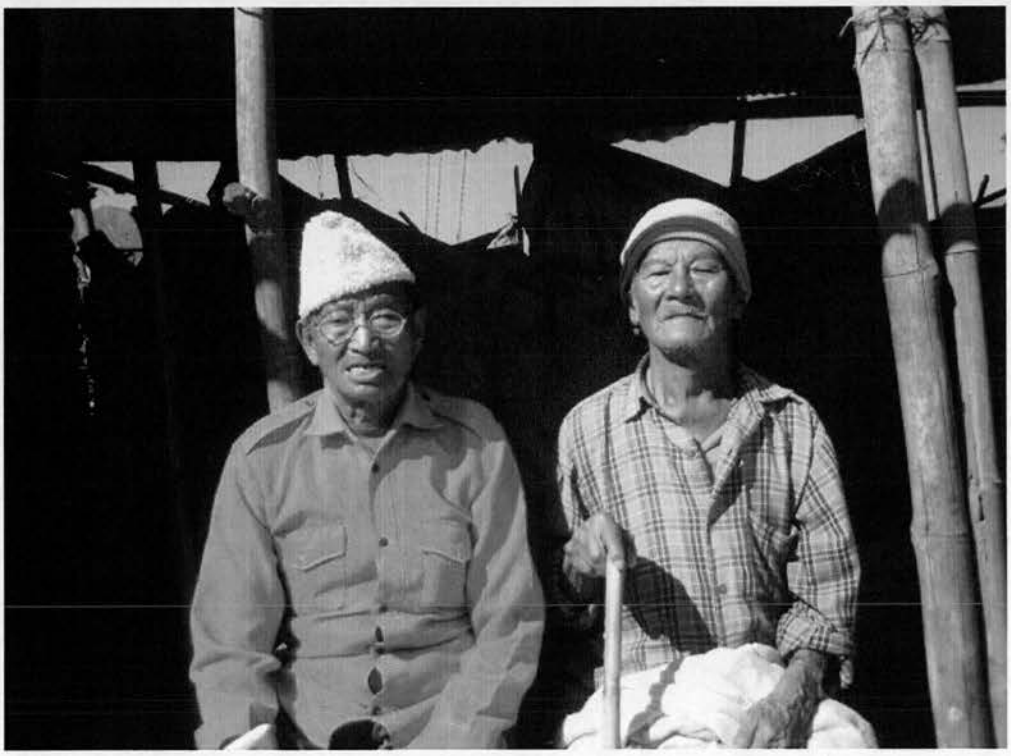

Plate 5.4 Two *lāhures* (Krishna and Hari) spending their retired life in the village, Chilangdi, Palpa

Plate 5.5 An Indian Army Pension camp, Chilangdi, Palpa

Plate 5.6 Men travelling back to their village by jeep, Tansen, Palpa

Chapter VI

Masculinities and Movement to India: meanings and experiences

Starting with recruitment to serve in the army of the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh and then systematically into the British army in India, migration from Nepal to India has long remained a significant livelihoods strategy among the village men of Palpa (Ahearn, 2004, Adhikari, 1993, Harper, 2003, Miller, 2000) and elsewhere in the hills in Nepal (Blaikie et al., 1980, Caplan, 1990, Hitchcock, 1961, Macfarlane, 1976, Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1995, Russell, 2000, Thieme and Müller-Böker, 2004).

There are historical evidence that the state policies and agrarian relations during the 18th and 19th century forced peasants in the hills to move out of their land and seek their livelihoods elsewhere including migration to Indian cities (Regmi, 1978, Caplan, 1990). It is estimated that around 0.5-1.3 million Nepali migrants 'temporarily' go to India in search of work opportunities contributing significantly to people's livelihoods and poverty reduction (Seddon et al., 2002, Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1995). About 90 per cent these migrants are believed to be male. As discussed earlier, since the beginning of 1990's there has been growing NGO discourses on trafficking of an increasing number of women and children from Nepal to Indian cities like Mumbai (Hausner, 2005, Joshi, 2001, Pigg, 2002). At the time of my field research in 2004/2005, the NGOs based in Kathmandu estimated that there are more than 150,000 girl children and women working in brothels in India. However, there is very little empirical or ethnographic evidence on migration from either side of the border.

Scholarly accounts have largely viewed this form of migration within a narrow economic framework. While this movement is largely understood as an economic venture, as a result of extreme poverty both within Nepal (Blaikie et al., 2002, Blaikie et al., 1980, Shrestha, 1990) and in the wider context (Breman, 1996,

Breman, 1985) under the category of 'labour migration' or 'seasonal labour migration', I suggest that it also needs to be understood from the social and cultural dimension, particularly when viewed from the sending perspective. Recently attempts have been made to give agency to those who move and bring a socio-cultural dimension to understand such movement (Shah, 2006), particularly within the framework of a livelihoods perspective (De Haan and Rogaly, 2002). In the context of Nepal, a few scholars have studied migration to India from the livelihoods perspective providing useful insights into how people make decisions about movement and consider social, economic and cultural factors that shape their mobility (Adhikari, 2001, Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1995, Thieme, 2006). All these show that there is a lack of ethnographic insights on the subject of male labour migration from Nepal hills to Indian cities. The available studies indicate that what is largely missing is the discussion and analysis of male labour migration from a socio-cultural dimension, based on how men themselves experience and perceive them.

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at multiple sites, including my journey with a group of men travelling to Mumbai, this chapter explores the meanings and experience of this form of movement in relation to gendered, familial, social and economic dynamics of those who move and their networks, from their own perspective. My fieldwork shows that while economic considerations are important, the movement of men from the hills of Nepal can be understood as an escape from a difficult socio-economic, cultural and familial situation and an opportunity for young men to experience a distant place, experiment with the pleasures and possibilities of manhood, earn and remit money home to fulfil their obligations as men and hope for upward socio-economic mobility of their households. Given that about 90 per cent of these migrants are male, this chapter brings the gendered meaning and experience of this form of movement since this is a relatively neglected aspect of masculinity discourse and a key aspect of gender analysis that has traditionally focussed on women. Therefore I am interested in how the *ideas* of masculinity play an important role in explaining the meaning and experience of this form of movement and contribute to the scholarship on socio-cultural dimensions of mobility and migration in general (De Haan and Rogaly, 2002, Osella and Gardner, 2004, Shah, 2006) and

mobility and masculinity in particular (Charsley, 2005, Osella and Osella, 2000). This will allow one to investigate how movement for work empowers or disempowers men as gendered beings (Jackson, 2001). This will also help to contribute to the debate on masculinity as an ideological space (MacInnes, 1998).

In the following paragraphs, I discuss how movement to India is spoken about locally and this is followed by my own travel experience with a group of three migrants going to Mumbai that shows the complexity and excitement associated with movement to India. Depending on experience travel has an impact on construction of different styles of masculinities. The next section discusses the decision making and the organisation of movement to India revealing that movement to India is far more complex than an economic venture and highlights the social and cultural dimension, particularly the conception of manhood in the sending context. I then look at life in Mumbai focusing on my ethnographic fieldwork with a group of Nepali men with whom I lived for six weeks. This reveals that within the constrained working and living conditions, Nepali men working in Mumbai were seen as trying their luck, exploring possibilities for realising their dreams and cultivating new dreams and possibilities of attaining manhood. In many ways, the living and working conditions in Mumbai appear to both empower and constrain men's identities. I conclude this chapter by examining the discussion on masculinity and how it is useful to understand the meaning and experience of movement.

Speaking of movement to India

Any fruitful analysis on the meaning of movement to India requires a discussion on how such a movement fow rok is spoken about, discussed and imagined in the sending context. In this context it is useful to explore how movement and mobility are integrated into the local styles of masculine identity (Osella and Osella, 2000). I do so by looking at different local terms people used to speak about men who went to work in India.

I discovered that while *India tira jāne* was the generic term people used to refer to those who went to work in India, depending on the context people also used the terms *lāhure*, *phāltu* and *jāgire* to talk about different categories of men who moved out of the village for work. These categories informed the different forms of manhood in the local context.

As discussed in the previous chapter although the term *lāhure* was mainly used for those who went to work in a foreign army and also of the men who went to work in the Gulf and South East Asian countries in recent years, the term was frequently used to talk about the men who went to work in India too. The term *lāhure* had become integrated into the everyday conversation in the village so much that it was used to talk about the men who had never been outside of the village. Its common use was found in the display of wealth, comfort, goods or knowledge. It was quite possible that a man who wore new clothes and walked about in the village would be teased as a *lāhure*. During my fieldwork in Palpa, a Bahun uncle used the term *lāhure* to wake up his nephew, who was sleeping in the veranda during the day, to go with him to the field. The uncle said, '*e lāhure uth, alchi ketā, hir, jāna parena bārimā hir, lāhure jhaī sutera, uth'*. In this context the uncle used the term *lāhure* to wake up his lazy nephew when he was expected to accompany other members to work in the field. Here it was important to consider the ethnic dimension of the use of the term *lāhure*. Among the Bahuns the term *lāhure* also signified people who lacked intelligence and spirituality but enjoyed material comfort, which was again part of their understanding of Magars. In Magar styles, recruitment in foreign army, for its symbolic and material value, was at the centre of what it means to be a man. However, the high caste Bahuns and those with *jāgire* ridiculed *lāhure* for their labouring work for earning money and providing family. Therefore, a *lāhure* was recognised as a successful man only within his own group.

At the same time, Bahuns and Magars used the term *chāure* to categorise men, which was used in contrast to the term *lāhure*. In this context *chāure* meant those who worked in a relatively undesired and useless setting in India and looked upon as 'old', 'weak' and 'wrinkled' while *lāhure* (among Magars) and *jāgire* (among

Bahuns) meant those who were in a desired setting, earned respect and ensured regular salary. *Lāhures* were spoken about as men who displayed lots of cash, bravery and experience of a foreign place and *jāgire* were men who were educated and had salaried employment, while *chāures* were men who could not display money, were weak and incompetent.

Likewise, the term *phāltu* was a very common word used by Magars and Bahuns to categorize people who were unemployed or worked in relatively undesired manual work with low wages and no job security, which was contrasted to a few commonly known as *jāgire* or *lāhure* who got more pay, were more intelligent, had a white collar job with some level of job security. It mostly referred to those who could not get recruited to the foreign army to be *lāhure* or those who could not get salaried jobs to be *jāgire*. The term *phāltu* meant useless and was used to talk about unproductive men who could not earn and demonstrate their obligations as men of worth. Other uses of the term *phāltu* were in relation to anything useless or that lacked worth, whether it was a person or a conversation or things. It was also used to talk about the men who did not do any work rather wandered around in the village or the unemployed men in the cities. The term *phāltu* was used in this context to categorise the men who were useless in performing their responsibilities.

Jāgires were considered to be responsible men who were able to ensure income through a regular salary and thus were able to take care of their duties as men effectively. Among Bahuns it was the centre of what it means to be a good man: working for the state as a paid employee stood as desired characteristic of an ideal man. I have discussed the *jāgire* category in the earlier chapter in detail.

All this showed that the experience of movement to India for work had complex meanings in the local conception. The different meanings showed that people used a variety of terms to categorize men those who went to India for work depending on the nature of work and the experience they underwent. Although going to India to work as manual workers was more common but comparatively less desired and

people often called it *phāltu kām*[87] or *sāno tino kām*[88], it was more desirable for men to go to India in search of work than stay in the village often managing their farm and/or working on others' land which was commonly referred to as *halo jotne* (literally meaning ploughing in the field) or *bhāri bhokne* (literally meaning carrying weight) or simply *phāltu*. In this sense, going to work in India provided an escape from being referred to under the traditional category of *halo jotne* or *bhāri bhokne* and look for opportunities to be referred as *jāgire* or *lāhure*. These different categorizes revealed that there is no such thing as a homogenous masculinity, but a range of different masculinities that are related to experiences of movement for work (Connell, 1995). At the sametime, Bahun styles of hegemonic masculinity differed from that of Magar.

Here, it may be useful to look at some historical evidence on agrarian relations during the 19th century, where peasants were compelled to share a proportion of their income with those who did not have a role in the production. Thus the peasants were unable to accumulate capital to increase agricultural productivity (Regmi, 1978). This showed that the importance of going to India was not just as an escape from the exploitative social structure but also that the social structure had an impact on the construction of local categories of manhood. Thus, compared to staying back in the village, going to work in India opened up possibilities of being modern and developed, exploring a distant place and demonstrating the conception of manhood.

Development discourse that has had a particular effect in viewing the village as a traditional place to be left in the past and urban areas as modern places to be desired (Pigg, 1992) had impacted on the meanings of movement in the local context. Thus, apart from viewing it as physical movement, movement of people to India or any other place was a movement in the ideological space of development and modernity too. The significance of movement to India lay in the possibility of what it offered to the individual man who moved and the household and how it related to the experience of other men in the community in the context of discourses of

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[87] It means useless work; work that has does not earn much respect and money.
[88] It means small work or work that has low status or value.

development that had an effect in creating rural and urban areas as social categories of differentiation (Pigg, 1992). The similar observation has been made by Mary Beth Mills in her study on young rural women involved in migration process in Thailand. She argues that economic compulsion was often not the major driving force behind women's decision to migrate to Bangkok, but rather it was the desire to participate in a 'modern' (*thansamay*) life (Mills, 1999).

Decision making

The question—why did men go to work in India – seemed irrelevant to those who were working in India and their households. To most of the people I interacted with and studied, the question was a stupid one as they felt that the answer to the question was self explanatory. The age old practice of men going to work in India was simply considered the thing to do as a part of managing the livelihoods of their households. Thus, the first thing to be said about this movement to India from the people's perspective is that there is nothing exceptional about this practice. A more interesting question to consider is, under what conditions the people made their decisions about movement. Although, the Neo-Marxist perspective shows the context in which these decisions are made, it provides very little insight into the actual process of decision making from the people's perspective. The structural perspective says little about the ways in which people experience their movement and what they themselves hope to gain out of it.

Neo-Marxist analysis over-emphasises the political-economic contexts that influence migration decisions, simultaneously disregarding people as active agents in managing their livelihoods (Breman, 1996, Breman, 1985, Shrestha, 1990). At the same time a rational economic approach to migration tends to isolate economic decision making, and consequently does not analyse the cultural, political and social contexts in which these decisions are made (Lee, 1966, Stark, 1991, Stark, 1980, Todaro, 1976). My fieldwork on movement to India shows that economic compulsions seem quite essential in determining choices people make about movement but choices are far more complex and refuse to stay within the logic of

economic rationality. This implies that the response to the question—why did men go to work in India—must be viewed in relation to a specific context in which the decisions to move are taken incorporating both the social and the cultural dimension (Whitehead, 2002, De Haan and Rogaly, 2002). Examining how the households and men who moved made decisions to go to a particular place in India at a particular time gives insight into how people are not just reactors to the larger forces or rational economic individuals, but rather are active actors who make decisions considering the significance of movement on their livelihoods. Although men had their own story about reasons for going to India, they also reflected several common experiences and themes. In the paragraphs below I present how men spoke about the decision making and the organisation of movement to India in relation to political-economy, identity, family, relationships and escalating violence in Nepal. Examining the dynamics of this movement, I argue that it is a gendered socio-cultural process that can be understood within the framework of masculinity.

Practice of *bhāgne*

One of the common themes that ran across most of the stories of the decision making for migration to India was *bhāgne*. Adolescent boys left home as young as twelve years old without consulting their parents to go to different destinations in the *terāi* and different cities in India. As discussed in the previous chapter, the experiences of *bhāgne* showed that the boys left as minors but transformed themselves as adults when they returned home. Almost any conversation on *bhāgne* was full of giggles and laughter that signified its meaning, which was associated with fun, excitement and a desire to see a distant place. Most of the men who went to work in India started their career of movement to India with *bhāgne* and continued from there. This feature has implications for understanding the practice of *bhāgne* as *a rite de passage* to adulthood. Movement as a *rite de passage* has been discussed by several authors (Uchiyamada, 2000, Grant and Zelenietz, 1980). At the same time, ethnic dimensions were important to understand the meaning and significance of *bhāgne* among the village men. Among the high caste Bahuns, the socialisation of children involved strict control with several disciplinary codes. For this reason, *bhāgne* was clearly

understood as deviant behaviour in Bahun styles of masculinity. Magars displayed a more liberal attitude towards childhood and children. Magars considered *bhāgne* a normal part of life among the adolescent boys since it was the providing for the family that was considered an important feature of good men. However, under the influence of global discourses on child rights and practice of schooling, *bhāgne* was increasingly viewed as a problem and not a normal practice and there had been a gradual decrease in this practice in the recent years. I have discussed the meaning of *bhāgne* in relation to *rite de passage* in details in an earlier chapter.

Survival strategy

Despite the long tradition, most of the men I spoke to emphasized that they left for India because of the situation back home (*ghar ko awāstha*). They spoke of movement to India as an escape from the difficult situation back home which at the same time provided them with an opportunity to improve their socio-economic situations and fulfil their obligation as good men. The difficult situation at home meant that men were unable to fulfil their obligation in securing the material needs of the household, thus it was a usual practice for them to move in search of income opportunities and demonstrate their manhood. It was a common feature of men from poor labouring households in the village. This was best reflected in the case of Krishna, a young unmarried Bahun of 19, who was working as a helper in a restaurant in Mumbai, leaving behind his parents and two young sisters back home. When I reached Krishna's house in Yamgha, his father was lying on a mat made of straw (*gundri*) on *pirhi* outside the house. Suffering from diabetes and tuberculosis, he could barely work. Krishna's mother was busy working on *bāri* beside their small hut while two of his sisters (aged 6 and 7) were playing in the courtyard with other children from the neighbourhood. The appearance of their house and the family members showed that they represented a relatively poor household. They owned insufficient land to provide them with sufficient grain for the entire year. Depending on the situation, they had to buy grain for 4-6 months (*besāhā*). Krishna's father had been working as a watchman (*chowkidar*) in Delhi for 17 years, which had been an important source of income for the household, until he fell ill two years previously

and could no longer go back to work. This meant that the responsibility to earn money had come to Krishna and the only option available was to follow the footsteps of his father and other relatives who had been going to India for work. Eventually, Krishna was to go to Mumbai, supported by his uncle who lived next door. He was excited when his mother told him about the possibility of going to Mumbai with his uncle and he immediately accepted it. Though he had heard a lot about Mumbai and many of his friends had been to India, he had never had a chance to go to Mumbai. His uncle took complete responsibility for paying the fare, accompanying him and finding work. When I met Krishna in a tea stall next to his workplace in Mumbai, he told me that he had been able to send money home on a regular basis. He was planning to go home in the next 3 months but expected to come back to work after a month. When asked why he had decided to come to Mumbai, using the phrase *gharko awastha* he said, 'The situation of my home was not good, so I came with my uncle to find work'. As the only able-bodied man in the family, he felt that he was responsible (*jimmāwār*) for earning money and regularly sending it back home to ensure the smooth functioning of their household (*ghar chalāune, ghar herne*). Though he did not feel that it was possible for him to earn a lot of money, he nonetheless felt that it was possible to earn reasonable money and improve the situation of his family back home (*kehi awasthā sudhārne, kehi rāmro holā bhanera*). To him, earning money to support his family was vital to ascertain his identity as a son (Osella and Osella, 2000). He was particularly concerned about the health of his father and the education and marriage of his two little sisters. (Interview, 13 March 2005) While Krishna's situation seemed to have been triggered by his father's illness, the practice of going to India was not uncommon in his family history and immediate social network. The situation of Krishna is very much similar to that described by Osella and Osella in the context of South India:

> For boys in the poorest labouring families, adolescence hardly exists: they move from an impoverished and deprived childhood in which their parents are unable to protect them from the knowledge of adulk realities into a young mangood, which immediately demands that they share their share of responsibility by dealing with those realities. Taking on responsibilities at home, bringing cash and paddy, building a new thatched house—all this enables a boy to enter the men's world (Osella and Osella, 2006: 40).

Krishna was considered as a good son among the poor labouring households in the village. Under the given circumstances, Krishna's effort to go to India and provide his family is ridiculed in the village context where *jāgire* and *lāhure* dominate the hegemonic styles of masculinity.

While the practice of going to India for work offered socio-economic mobility only for a few, it nonetheless played an important role in sustaining the cash needs for most of the households. A few people like Kamal Nath Parajuli, a Bahun man of 30, who initially came to India to work as a domestic worker at the rate of IRs 300 per month was now running an expensive guest house earning more than IRs 30,000 per month, meant that people saw Mumbai as a land of possibilities and opportunities. After he completed his schooling, Kamal Nath had a choice either to study in Kathmandu with the support of his maternal uncle or follow in his father's footsteps or go to India to be able to contribute to the household expenses and the education of his younger siblings. He went to India with a neighbour and started working as a domestic worker. He later went to Mumbai to work as an assistant in a guest house, which was arranged by his maternal uncle. After working for more than 5 years, he was running the guest house on a contract and was able to earn a good amount of money. Following the economic success of Kamal Nath, his entire family had recently shifted their settlement to the *terāi* where they had bought some agricultural land and built a house. From the village standard, it was a significant achievement He was extremely busy in managing the guest house, always wore formal suits and was referred to 'big man' (*badā ādmi*) by the security guard at the entrance of his building. The ability to earn money, afford *basāi sarne* to *terāi* and transform the socio-economic status of the family was an important attribute that contributed to Kamal Nath's identity as a successful man.

While the socio-economic situation of the household had played an important role in the decision making for households like Krishna's and Kamal Nath's, the responsibility as a man in the family appeared critical in their decision making. Such movement was not only a reaction to economic desperation. This was clear in the diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds of those who went to work in India. It

was not only the economically poorest who went to work in India; neither was it exclusive among the people from the upper strata. Rather the households across all socio-economic backgrounds sent their members to work in India. Even the village households with teachers, *jāgires*, local political leaders and members of the well to do households had gone to work in India. Thus it was not accurate to view all those who go to work in India as the poorest people from the hills of Nepal.

Escaping relationships

Movement to India was not always characterised by a need to work and providing for the family. The experience of several men showed that movement was an escape from difficult relationships at home. The case of Bharat Bashyal, a Bahun man of 38 from a relatively well off household in Palpa, who was working as an assistant in a doctor's clinic in sub urban Mumbai, shows that he escaped as he could not cope with the failure to be a successful son. Frustrated with his inability to run the business and make huge profits, he escaped to India without even telling his family. Seeing the potential for the business of steel roofing, he had opened a shop in Tansen which was fully supported by his father. Despite strong protest from his brothers, who were more or less established in different sectors (civil servant, a local political leader and teacher), Bharat decided to go ahead with his plan of starting the business. His lack of know-how in running a business meant that he was unable to collect money from the creditors and went bankrupt within 2 years. This was a humiliating experience for him and he found it difficult to face his family and other relatives. He left home for India at the age of 24 with NRs 5000 in his pocket. At that time he did not have any idea about where to go or what to do. He told me, 'I felt like running away'. With no previous experience or contact, he went to Gorakhpur and took a train to Mumbai. Though he had never been to Mumbai, he decided to go to Mumbai on the spur of the moment when he saw a train leaving the station. He had heard of Mumbai in his village from relatives and neighbours, and his father had been there. On the train journey he met two men from the neighbouring district who were going back to work in Mumbai. With the friendship developed on the train, he lived with them for 15 days and then found the job with a doctor as his assistant. Though

initially he did not plan to work for very long, later he felt strongly about earning some money before he could go back home. Back at home, everybody was worried about his absence. There were rumours that he had died while other rumours circulated that he had lost his leg. His father came to know of his whereabouts from someone in the village and visited him after two years. Though his father wanted him to go back home, he insisted that he would not go back home unless he had earned a substantial amount of money to pay his father. Eventually, he returned home after six years and got married. After fifteen years of work in Mumbai, he had been able to earn a good amount of money on a regular basis. Though he lived in a shared room in a slum, he had bought two rooms from his savings, worth IRs 300,000. He felt that the situation in Mumbai was far more favourable for his children and wife than at home. He was looking for better housing so that his wife and children could join him. Bharat's case suggests that though money was certainly an important part in his movement to India, it was closely linked to his manhood. Primarily he went to India to escape humiliation of being labelled an unsuccessful man by his family and the community.

The following two cases show how movement to India was a strategy to deal with relationship problems at the family level. For Milan Thapa, a Magar man of 25 from Palpa, it was his marriage with the girl of his choice from a 'lower caste' 3 years previously that led him to make the decision about going to Mumbai. His decision to marry Kamala was not accepted by his family. Though he had hoped that his family would eventually accept (*bhitrāune*) Kamala, it did not happen even after more than a year of their marriage. Furthermore, Milan was repeatedly pressurized to leave Kamala if he wanted his share of the property (*ansha*). While Milan had earlier been to Delhi for a short time with his friends when he was 14, this time he decided to leave for Mumbai with the support of his friends and in-laws already working in Mumbai, who provided him with the necessary financial and social support to find work. As a man, his decision to go to Mumbai was prompted by the need to find a means of income to support his new family, and to escape from the everyday problems he faced in the village. He had a child aged one and half years old. He felt

that it was not an easy choice for him to sever ties with his parents but his love was more important to him than anything else.

Likewise, both the ongoing practice and infertility seemed a critical element in Nanda Lal's decision to move to India. Nanda Lal, 52, a Bahun man from Palpa, had been going to India since he was 15. Initially, he went to Delhi with his friends for fun. When the money he stole from his father ran out, he worked in a hotel (restaurant) for 3 months to enable him to earn his bus fare to go back home. Since then he had been to different parts of India, including Delhi, Bangalore and Calcutta as well as several years of experience in Mumbai. He had a total of more than 28 years of working life in India. When he went to Mumbai, his second wife had run away blaming him for infertility. He had severed his relations with his family members and relatives when he got married a second time, with the hope that he would have children, which did not happen. He was then left with virtually no social support in the village, and he found it difficult to live in the village under his new circumstances.

The three cases presented above showed that movement to India was not just related to work and providing for the family. Movement to India provided these men an escape from difficult situation in their families and relationships.

Violent conflict

Men spoke of the escalating conflict in Nepal prompting them to move to India in search of security and livelihoods. The phrase 'caught in the middle' between the Royal Nepal Army and Maoists was frequently used by the men to talk about those who saw their movement as a means of escape from political conflict in the country. I found a few cases where the political instability, particularly the Maoist movement, had affected them directly, and that was the reason for making decisions about movement. While Kamlesh, a married Chetri man of 29 denied that he had quitted the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) because of Maoist pressure, the particular timing of him quitting the job during the state of emergency had meant that people spoke of

Maoist pressure being a major reason for him quitting the job. While he cited escalating conflict as the reason for his resignation from the RNA, people in the village believed that his resignation was not accepted and so he had fled to India. This was also supported by the fact that Kamlesh had returned home only once since he went away. When he first went to Mumbai he was helped by his cousin, who was living there for many years. Working in Mumbai provided better opportunities to earn money to fulfil his obligations as a man but this also meant that he was unable to live with his wife and children. His case demonstrated a complication in fulfilling the material and emotional responsibility as a husband and father. He was waiting for the right time to bring his wife and children to India but it was not clear when.

Prakash Ale, a Magar boy of 22, who worked as a domestic worker in Mumbai, had left home to avoid trouble after his brother had joined the Maoist militia three years previously. This clearly showed that escalating conflict was the central element in his decision to work in Mumbai. Though he was sympathetic to the Maoists and supported his brother's involvement, he did not join the militia as his parents needed to be looked after. He found it difficult to stay in the village as RNA men often came and abused his relatives and friends, who supported the Maoists. Later his mother arranged for him to go to Mumbai with his maternal uncle who was already working there. A similar story was shared by Netra, a Bahun man of 25, who worked as an assistant to a doctor in Mumbai. He left Nepal the year before, after he found it extremely difficult to continue his private clinic close to his native village. He had to cope with the pressure to treat the Maoists who often wanted him to treat the injured militia. At the same time there was surveillance and a threat from the Royal Nepal Army. Apart from the risk, his business was going quite well and he was able to earn good money. The threat from the escalating conflict had meant that he was pressurized by his in-laws to close the clinic and go to Mumbai, with the support of his brother in law already working in Mumbai. Eventually, as told by his in-laws, he left behind his wife and children when he went to Mumbai. Though he missed his wife and children, he did not have plans to bring them to Mumbai as he saw his movement as a short-term one. He wanted to return to Nepal and open a clinic somewhere else, if not in his previous place, but his in-laws had been pressurizing

him to find good work and stay in Mumbai until the risk was reduced. Though was trying to find work in urban areas in Nepal, he felt that he did not have the right 'connections' and enough money to do that.

While there was widespread talk that the political instability and the Maoist conflict had led to an increase in the number of people going to Mumbai in recent years, except for a handful of people who were directly forced to move out as a result of conflict, the experience of others showed that the escalation of conflict was not necessarily the reason for their movement. Furthermore, interaction with those who went to India in recent years showed a complicated relationship between the escalation of conflict and movement to India. It was extremely difficult to conclude whether their movement was caused by conflict or not. The fact that they went to India at the time of escalating political conflict made it easy to speculate that their movement was triggered by conflict but existence of the ongoing practice of movement to India in their households and social networks made it difficult to single out conflict as the reason for their movement to India. All this meant that the relationship between the conflict in Nepal and movement of Nepalis to work in India was complicated. Any inference on this aspect of Nepali society, without a systematic study, should be treated with caution.

The range of stories of the decision making showed that movement to work in Indian cities was a part of men's life in the hills of Nepal. One particular characteristic of those who went to work in India was that almost all of them were unmarried when they started to go to India. Such movement offered an escape from difficult situations at home, and it was viewed as an opportunity to deal with such situations. In particular I have shown that such constraints were very much related to the masculine identities and the responsibilities of men in the hills of Nepal, and the decision to move was prompted by their desire to protect and prove their manliness. For the village men, life in the village would not always offer opportunities for demonstrating manliness and in many situations it might even constrain it. It was in this context these men viewed their movement as a possibility to attain their

masculine identity by being able to secure some money, experience a distant place and integrate themselves within the village life.

Journey

James Clifford provides an interesting metaphor of 'routes' that he used as the title of his book to talk about how 'routes' and not 'roots' should be central to understanding human society. He takes issue with the statement 'every man ....was a traveller' and puts forward a point that travelling rather than dwelling is an important site for study (Clifford, 1997).

The insights from Clifford is very useful when we have a situation where studies of migration are mostly based on either the sending and/or receiving context but what goes on in between has rarely been the concern of the scholars. Drawing on the concept of 'routes' (Clifford, 1997) in his study of Yakhas, Russell uses travel as a method to trace migrants and argues that a study of ethnic identity must also take into account those who have moved out (Russell, 2000). Therefore, understanding the experience of the movement of hill men who go to work in India requires us to study their life not just at both ends of their movement but also their journey. In this context, I find it useful to address this gap in the literature by describing the travel experience of these men, based on my own travel with a group of three men who were on their way to Mumbai. Characterised by ambiguity and insecurity, the travel experience shows that border is a liminal site in which the migrants stand on the threshold to renegotiate identities.

Whether accompanied by elders or not, the departure of young village men was a common scene in the study area. Almost every day on my way to the village from Tansen, I was able to observe men leaving for India in groups of three to five and often there were one or two boys accompanied by a returnee. They made their way to Tansen to catch a bus to Butwal, a town in the *terāi*. Playing loud popular Bollywood music, the buses to Butwal departed every 20-30 minutes from the noisy bus park in

Tansen carrying about 20-40 passengers. It took about 2/3 hours to travel to Butwal which had frequent buses to the border at Sunauli.

The journey to India was long and often involved risks of being cheated or robbed, as well as the excitement it offered. Depending on the destination it took about 2-4 days to go to India. The journey involved travelling through the *terāi* and cities like Butwal where many migrants had heard of bitter experiences of ill health, robbing and cheating. It involved very frightening experiences of encounters with people from a different culture in the plains, who were considered to be very dangerous. Travellers were often asked for the fare more than once. People spoke of food that made them unconscious and being robbed in the hotels. Men took precautions by travelling in groups and keeping money hidden in inside pockets, by avoiding anything to eat given by strangers, and by avoiding overnight stays in hotels. One of the major problems was faced when they returned home on a rare holiday when they were exploited on the return journey. It was the police, railway officials, goons and thieves who were frequently referred to as the exploiters on their journey. Places like Gorakhpur and Sunauli were considered to be the worst places where they were often cheated and/or threatened.

I travelled with a group of three men from Palpa going to work in Mumbai, after meeting them in Bhairahawa, a commercial town on the Nepal side of the border.[89] Two (Hari and Anil)[90] were travelling for the first time while the third man (Kumar) was returning to his work in Mumbai after spending three weeks at home. I knew both Hari and Anil, who were young men, but I had not met Kumar before who was related to both the boys as their distant uncle.

With his 15 years of work experience in Mumbai, Kumar was our leader. He told us that it was important to look confident at the border crossing otherwise it was possible to be harassed by police or other officials, including 'strange looking

[89]I had initially planned to travel with a few men from Palpa to India but it did not work out as I was unable to go to the village due to a blockade imposed by the Maoists. Instead I took a flight to Bhairahawa to travel with a group of three men travelling to Mumbai. I have discussed my fieldwork experience in the context of conflict in chapter two.

[90] People's real names have been changed, throughout this thesis, to preserve their anonymity.

people' trying to cheat. He told us that we needed to be extremely cautious while travelling as people could not be trusted in this part of the journey. With the mounting pressure from the heat and the fear, there was an uncomfortable anxiety in the group when we left Bhairahawa. After getting off the bus, we took two rickshaws at the Sunauli border to reach the bus station on the other side where we could get a bus to the train station in Gorakhpur. The combination of pressure to be seen as confident and the fear was prevalent at the time of crossing. As our rickshaws were heading towards the border crossing two policemen, standing at the side of the road, beckoned to our rickshaws. They stopped our rickshaw, looked through our bags suspiciously and began to ask questions in an authoritative voice. Where had we come from? Where we wanted to go and why? Though questioning was a regular feature at the border, it was nonetheless frightening and humiliating. The border appeared a strange place with many loaded trucks waiting to cross, rickshaws carrying people and many other travellers crossing the border. As we crossed the border, officials with customs, immigration, police and an anti-trafficking NGO named Maiti Nepal were visible.

Apart from commercial advertisements, the border was a site of trafficking, visible by the hoardings at the border area and in the activities of NGOs like Maiti Nepal (Hausner, 2005). Maiti Nepal had a small office at the Sunauli border with two members of staff constantly checking the movement of women and children over the border. At the time of crossing the border, I saw a Nepali family (a man, a woman, one son and one daughter aged about 16-18 years old) questioned by Maiti Nepal's staff. Likewise, there was another couple crossing the border who were stopped and questioned again. The frustrated husband was trying to convince the staff that his wife was accompanying him to Mumbai where he worked but he was not believed. He had never had to prove to anyone in the village that they were husband and wife. Initially, the wife kept quiet but later spoke in anger to the staff saying that they were creating a problem unnecessarily. The couple did not have a recommendation letter from the VDC which the Maiti Nepal staff requested. It was eventually the argument of the wife which allowed them to move on. Other people crossing the border made remarks that this was a typical scene at the border. Later I met the couple in the

railway station in Gorakhpur who told me that they were unnecessarily given trouble by 'those people', as the wife referred to the Maiti Nepal staff. During our conversation, the wife asked me, 'Now you tell me, now we need documents to prove that we are husband and wife. Why don't they go to our village and ask for it?' It was considered extremely difficult for women to cross the border and almost everybody had experienced this. The helpless husband stood beside his wife and smiled at me as his wife continued to complain.

As we entered the Indian side of the border, our rickshaw was stopped by Indian police and then by the Indian immigration. They asked us questions: where had we come from? Where were we going? What were we carrying? While we did not face significant trouble from the officials at the border crossing, the experience of facing different types of officials made us feel very vulnerable. One of them jokingly asked if we were Maoists or had any links with the Maoists. The border crossing experience continued with encounters with a series of officials and men.

Before we reached the bus stop our rickshaw was stopped by two frightening men who wanted us to buy bus tickets from them to travel on their bus. Scared as we were, we said that we would like to go by jeep (which is much faster and more comfortable for the same price) but they forced us to buy tickets from them and travel by their bus. When I objected, they physically forced us to take tickets and travel in the crowded bus, standing for about three hours to Gorakhpur. While I had travelled to India by road before as a student, I never had such an experience (probably because I always travelled with my middle class friends in good clothes and we spoke English to officials). When I resisted (in Hindi) we were told, 'go....go back to Nepal...you don't get anything then you come....go...go run...' (*chalo.... chalo bhāgo Nepal jāo....kuch khāneko nahi miltā, phir chale aāte ho...chaolo...chalo...bhāgo*). I was pulled aside by Kumar who asked me not to argue with those people. He told me that this was a very common experience at the border and advised me to stay quiet. The experience was threatening as we found ourselves helpless in a space where we had to follow what those men told us to do. The feeling of insecurity was deep because of the difference in identity.

On the bus, there were many Nepalis (most of them were men with a few women accompanying their husbands) watching each other which made me feel more relieved. A loud Bollywood film song was playing in the background. A man working in the Indian Army (*lāhure*) was standing in the bus next to me. Referring to the earlier incidence of the use of force, he told the conductor that he should let the passengers choose the bus and be given a seat. In reply, the conductor used several abusive words. It was a highly tense and frightening moment as the conductor with his associate tried to drag the *lāhure* out of the bus. Realising the difficult situation, the humiliated *lāhure* and the rest of the people kept quiet. Despite the meaning of *lāhure* as a brave man in the village, the *lāhure* travelling in the bus in India was in a vulnerable position and he had no other choice than to keep quiet. Unlike in the village, the *lāhure* was intimidated by another man in a new place.

We finally reached Gorakhpur, a crowded city with many Nepalis at the railway station. Just outside the railway station there were several Nepali restaurants and lodges aimed at Nepalis. On the railway platforms there were many Nepali men waiting for trains to go to different places. Some of these people had reservations while others were planning to travel on the 'waiting list' and/or crowded third class. We stood in the queue for about two hours and finally managed to get our tickets on the 'waiting list'. In the meantime we were approached by several ticket brokers who promised to get us confirmed tickets. We declined such offers as such brokers were known for cheating and issuing fake tickets. Several other Nepalis waiting in the railway station preferred to group together and were very conscious to foil any attempt to cheat them. The situation made us conscious that the brokers were making attempts to cheat because we looked different. The train finally approached the platform and we joined the crowd to get on the train. Though we did not have reservations, we went into the reservation coach with the hope of securing seats with a bribe. After paying IRs 250 extra for each person, we managed to get seats to Mumbai, which took 36 hours. The other option for travel was to sit on the floor in the same coach or go on the crowded third class coach which hardly had any space even for standing. The train was a new experience for the two young men in our

group, which began a long conversation about the railway in India, travellers and different places. On the coach we met other Nepalis—a group of four men from Syangja and two groups of families from Palpa—returning to work in Mumbai and Pune after spending their holidays at home.

The visit of the ticket staff (known as TT) and police often made the members of our group feel conscious and vulnerable. The man from Syangja told us about harassment from TT when he was travelling with his cousin. The TT approached them and asked for the ticket, but he did not return the ticket to them. After 3-4 minutes he returned and asked for the ticket again. When they told him that he had taken their ticket just a few minutes before, they were threatened. Finally they had to pay IRs 400 each to enable them to continue travelling. Such a case, however, was not limited to Nepalis alone, rather it was a common experience faced by many other travellers too.

The journey involved fun too. The excitement of seeing new places, eating different types of food and travelling in the train was obvious in the group. The journey involved singing songs, playing cards and conversation about comparisons of life in Mumbai to that back in the hills. During the travel, Nepalis trusted other Nepalis in matters like looking after the luggage. From the perspective of people from the hills, to trust someone the person needed to look like a *pahādi*, speak Nepali and it was even better if the person came from a neighbouring district. During the conversation, a few people became even closer after discovering that they knew a common person or had some other thing (Nepali politics or movie) in common. Here it is useful to draw comparison with issues of Nepalis in India and their identity (Hutt, 1997, Subba and Sinha, 2003).

All this showed that, apart from the excitement of seeing new places, people and culture on their journey to Mumbai, it was also a humiliating experience for many. During the journey, these men were exposed to other styles of being a man and felt that their sense of being a man was threatened in a place where they were isolated with very little help. As discussed above, these men went through a threatening

experience in the face of constant questioning and attempts to cheat them. It was an unforgettable experience for many as they lost their money. Therefore the ability to travel smoothly without any difficulty or with little difficulty was considered an important aspect of manhood in the conversations among these men.

Life in Mumbai

Working life is a site where gender differences are defined, maintained and reconstituted (Jackson, 2001). It is an important space where men accumulate material and symbolic capitals to assert their identity. In this section I will examine what life was like in Mumbai for those who escaped home in search of working opportunities and possibilities, as discussed earlier. For men who arrived in Mumbai working life was very different from their home. Only a few of them were aware of the difficult working and living conditions before they arrived, when they would find that they would be living in a room shared with 4-5 others in the middle of a slum community in sub urban Mumbai, and work for long hours often in difficult and exploitative conditions.

Within the constrained way of life, Nepali men working in Mumbai were trying their luck, exploring possibilities for realising their dreams and cultivating new dreams and possibilities. Working in Mumbai offered these men an opportunity to become involved in the consumption of what are considered as modern goods, images and experiences, and explore freedom away from the strict norms observed in the village. These consumption practices were related to the way of life in the cities like Mumbai but, when compared with their village life in Nepal, they also functioned as key symbols of progress and modernity which was influenced by the discourses of development (Pigg, 1996, Pigg, 1992, Mills, 1999). One way to characterize life in Mumbai was the transformation that the village men went through in their consumption practices.

By focussing primarily on the gendered life experience of Nepalis working as watchmen, domestic workers and helpers in hotels and restaurants, I will discuss the

life of these men, who experienced a complex tension between fulfilling their desire and obligations as men, in the face of difficult circumstances that often put their identity as men into crisis.

Working conditions

As indicated earlier in this chapter, work experience played a critical role in the identity of a man in the village. Except for a very few who went to India for short visits to see the place, including wives who accompanied their husband, almost all the Nepali men went in search of work.

Depending on the situation, some jobs were already arranged before the men arrived to work in India, while others found jobs within a few weeks of their arrival. In all situations the role of the accompanying family member, relative or other social networks was crucial in finding jobs (Thieme, 2006). The support of the social networks was so important that it was almost impossible to find a job or place to live in Mumbai without it. In almost all cases, people did not go to Mumbai without knowing anyone to support them finding work or a place to live. Upon arrival the newcomers were provided with free accommodation and food until a job and appropriate accommodation was arranged for them. Until the job was arranged, the newly arrived men often wandered around the locality, met other friends/relatives, helped in housekeeping (cooking, cleaning and washing dishes), played cards with others living in the same accommodation and often slept when there was nothing else to do. If they were lucky to find someone free, they went with them to see different places. The conversation of the newcomers focussed on the busy roads, crowds, people of different types, the sea, high-rise buildings, different types of food and liquor, and availability of brothels. Two men who travelled with me accompanied a man who came from a neighbouring village and worked in the film industry and was known for arranging jobs. Going to the film shooting spots provided them with entertainment while at the same time it provided opportunities for jobs. After two days in Mumbai a group of three men from Palpa including an old man of 62 and two young men of 22-23 years old had come looking for work. They began to look for

jobs after they had arrived and after meeting their friends and other people from their village. With the help of their host, two of them managed to find work within 3 days as helpers in a restaurant while the third one found the job as a replacement watchman after a week.

Chaukidārs

Those who worked as watchmen were known as *caukidār* or *gorkhā* or *bahādur* and were employed in private bungalows, housing colonies, government offices, factories, hospitals or businesses. This was perhaps the most common job among the Nepali men working in Mumbai.

As indicated earlier, it was the social networks that played a key role in finding this type of work, but commercialization of the security business under the multinational companies, such as Group Four, meant that the social networks that long formed the basis of a continuous supply of Nepali men to work as watchman, was slowly getting replaced by formal procedures of recruitment. For generations, watchmen were directly employed by the owners with the help of previous employees or some other social networks, and there were a few experienced watchmen who worked as middle-men to arrange the watchmen jobs for the potential employers. The expansion of the security business meant that residents and offices shifted the recruitment of watchmen to security agencies like Group Four. This has had serious implication for job opportunities within the security sector for Nepalis. The standardization of recruitment, demanding educational qualifications in these agencies, meant that most of the Nepalis who dropped out of school early did not qualify for the jobs. While a few Nepalis working through these security agencies were earning better money and it provided better security, it was the inability to get into the sector in the first place that was considered a major hurdle by many Nepalis. Recruitment through security agencies required completion of a school education and some understanding of English, along with good physical health and a pleasant appearance. At the same time, men said that working with such companies was demanding, as it had very strict rules and required knowledge of paper work. A few men I spoke to felt that, unlike direct employment, it was very difficult to manipulate the working hours and

working arrangements while working with a security agency. There was a mixed reaction from the informants that while some of the companies preferred Nepalis because of the strong tradition, others felt that Nepalis were no longer wanted, as they found other people to do the work at a cheaper rate. This process meant that more Nepalis were looking for alternative employment opportunities in hotels and restaurants, other manual labour or domestic help. In one instance, a Bahun man had kept Bahadur as his surname, as it was thought that those with the Bahadur[91] surname, had a better chance of being selected for watchmen jobs. Such perception was influenced by the colonial discourse on a martial race that was reflected in the recruitment of men from certain hill ethnic groups to the British Army (Caplan, 1991, Des Chene, 1991).

The working hours of watchmen were not fixed and it was usual to see these men working overtime, often up to 15-17 hours a day, to earn more money to enable them to save and send money back to their family in Nepal. A few of them working as watchmen through a security agency worked a fixed 10-12 hour shift, plus some overtime work, on a regular basis. Depending on the situation, their duty involved staying awake the whole night or working during the day on a shift basis. Most of them worked both day and night shifts, as well as working in two places at different times. Long hours of work also meant that it was stressful and it was not possible to do anything other than work.

The monthly salary of watchmen ranged from anywhere between IRs 2500 and 5000 but they were able to earn more money by working overtime and doing other work (e.g.: taking children to the school, cleaning the car, shopping etc) for the residents as well as getting occasional tips from the residents. Though most of the watchmen worked long hours, it was not always possible for them to dramatically change their living condition. Despite this, men I spoke to seemed happy with their jobs though they hoped to find better jobs later. Although a few of them initially felt that the job was difficult and boring, they found it easier as they got used to it. At the beginning language was a difficulty for many, but as they continued to work they picked it up

[91] The literal meaning of the Nepali term Bahadur is brave.

well. Some of them even learned Marathi and English as they continued to work. Despite the long working hours, the job as watchmen was particularly important for the flexibility it provided to work overtime, earn more money and assert their manhood.

Watchmen were usually given a uniform, a long stick and a whistle, but this was not always the case. Dressed in a uniform, holding long sticks and often with a moustache, the watchmen moved around their building, checked cars and people entering the building and demonstrated their employer's confidence in them. As the owner of the building passed through the gate, they often displayed their obedience and discipline with a salute. The job was considered easier they frequently called it 'stick holding job' (*dandā samātne kām*)—when compared to work in restaurants and domestic help that required long hours of work often in difficult conditions. In the words of one Bahun watchman of 48, the job was very easy as he did not have to do anything other than being there. In some ways, the job of watchman did seem to compensate for the frustration of Magar men who could not get recruited into a foreign army, particularly because a watchman job was related to providing security. But the job also involved loneliness as they spent most of their time standing at the gate and often there were hardly anyone with whom they could talk, except the domestic workers staying in or visiting the building or watchmen from the neighbouring building. It was almost impossible for them to get involved in intimacy with others. The difficulty of working as watchmen was when they would be attacked by thieves or they were unable to catch the thieves, which resulted in the loss of the job instantly or deductions from their salary for a few months. However, it did provide an opportunity to obtain a good security and thus recognition as a more capable person, which sometimes led to an increase in their salary.

Except in the case of a job through a security agency, it was not easy to get leave nor did they want to take leave without pay. This meant that it was very difficult to take leave to go home. The support of friends and relatives was crucial at the time of visiting home since the job always required a replacement. During this time, either they had to find someone temporarily to work in their absence or give up the job

completely. Commonly known as *satta basne*, many of them were able to help each other mutually by working for the other person. In the case where they did not find a mutual replacement, they had to leave the job to someone else, usually a newcomer. Once they went home, various commitments and problems at home meant that not all returned to the job on time. This usually resulted in the loss of their job. On returning, many others found that their job was given to someone else thus needing them to look for a job again. Though frequent home visit was important to these men to reinforce their manliness in their family and community, it was not always easy for them to get leave from work to enable them to go home. On the one hand they had to cope with the pressure of continuing their job and earning, while on the other hand they felt obliged to go home regularly.

Helpers in restaurants and hotels

Another popular and growing sector where Nepali men were working in Mumbai was in the restaurants, hotels and food stalls spread throughout Mumbai. It was common to find Nepalis working in Chinese restaurants and food stalls where they worked as cooking assistants, waiters and cleaners. Working in this sector did not always require qualifications or experience other than trust established through social networks. While working as helpers in restaurants was looked down upon by other Nepalis in Mumbai, this was a sector where a growing number of Nepali men were finding work in the face of fierce competition for jobs in Mumbai. Those working as helpers in hotels and restaurants were paid a relatively low salary i.e. about IRs 2000-2500 including food and accommodation. Working in this sector meant that the men had to work for the entire day and sleep only after the business was closed for the day at about midnight. The work involved strict monitoring and direction from the owner or supervisor. Depending on the specific roles assigned, working in hotels required them to remain in front of ovens in the heat, often drenched in sweat, cleaning dishes and wiping floors/tables for hours, leaving their hands pale and rough. The work was considered physically demanding with very little opportunity for intimacy. It was the productivity and not their well-being which was a priority for the employers. Inability to follow instruction and work pressure from the owner often resulted in abusive words and humiliation in front of other workers. The sense

of powerlessness was visible when they had to follow the authoritative instructions. Very few of these men had ever washed dishes, managed the kitchen or served food to the guests in their home. The area of the kitchen that was completely alien to these men back home was now their workplace.

Domestic workers

A growing but invisible workplace for the increasing number of Nepali boys (aged between 14-20) was to work as domestic workers in middle class houses in sub-urban Mumbai.[92] Often invisible, except when they left the home for 2-3 hours day, these young men spent most of their time inside the flat of their middle class employer. The owners did not like outsiders communicating with their workers, neither did they like their workers spending much time outside their house. When sent by the owner to buy vegetables, a Magar boy of 14 who worked as a domestic worker, took time out to come to the news stand to speak to other Nepalis working in the same locality. These young men spent most of their time preparing and cooking food, cleaning dishes, cleaning the house and clothes. They did not require any qualifications for the job, since the job was arranged through social networks. The employers inquired about the caste of the worker at the time of the appointment and it was widely said that Bahuns had a better chance of finding work as a domestic worker. Therefore, caste identity remained important among Nepali migrants in Mumbai.

Four employers I spoke to trusted and employed the Nepali men because they found them loyal, but this was not always the case. There were a few who felt that the Nepalis in recent years were not as loyal and hardworking as before and cited examples of Nepalis involved in stealing and other criminal activities. Increasingly the image of Nepali men had suffered greatly, as they were becoming known as criminals, drunkards and gamblers. While people who went to work in Mumbai from other parts of India, including locals, were equally involved in crime, the

[92] Known as maids or *bāis*, the wife of some of the Nepali men worked as domestic workers on a part time basis for 2-3 hours a day in each house, often cooking food, cleaning clothes and washing dishes. The practice of keeping maids on a part-time basis is a very popular phenomenon in middle class houses in Mumbai.

involvement of Nepalis in criminal activities had always been scandalized and published (Thieme, 2006, Varma, 1997). While criminalization of migrants is not a novel issue (Inda, 2006), Nepalis in India were going through this process. What was particularly striking in this case was the shift in their image from a positive image of loyal Nepali *kāncha*/bahādur to dangerous thieves and goons *(chor, gundā)* (Interview with two employers, 17 March 2005).

The ideological space of masculinity was a strategy used by these men to cope with difficult working conditions. From the perspective of these men, it was fine for men to work in difficult situations and take risks.

Living Condition

After arriving in Mumbai by train when we followed Kumar to his 'room', he told us 'do not feel bad, we live in a *jhopadpatti* (slum). What to do, it is like this, all of us live like this.' Hari and Anil, the two boys who travelled with us had heard of the word *jhopadpatti* but never thought that it would be like living in *jhupadi*[93]. As we were walking through the lanes of the slum, covering his nose with his hand, Anil reacted, 'oho! It smells really bad...what is it?' Kumar replied, 'it is like this. You will get used to it slowly. It does not smell to me at all. We all laughed and followed Kumar along the narrow lane, avoiding stepping in the gutter. Apart from its use for drainage and a walking path, the narrow lane was a space where people bathed, washed and dried clothes, processed vegetables and was a play ground for children. A housing block that we passed just before we entered the slum settlements was the work place for some of the Nepalis who worked as watchmen or domestic workers.

With the lower level of income, highly expensive housing and pressure to save money, the Nepali men working in Mumbai were living in slum housing except for a few (mostly those who worked as watchmen, domestic helpers and helpers in hotels) who were provided with accommodation at the workplace. Except for a few with families who rented a single room on their own, almost all the Nepali men rented a

[93] a type of small hut in the hills that signified poverty and looked like a cowshed or firewood shed

room (*kholi*) in a slum which 4-8 people shared. The number of people living in a room varied depending upon the arrival of someone from the village in search of work, and the number of people visiting home during holidays.

Most of them lived very close to the work place thus ensuring that they did not have to spend money on commuting. The housing involved congested rooms with poor maintenance that often lacked basic amenities like water and sanitation. Many rooms did not have a water supply thus they had to use public water tanks. Often they took electricity illegally by paying bribes. Most of the housing lacked a toilet facility and they had to go to a nearby public toilet or use shrubs close to the settlement. A few others, who had been living there for a long and had the intention to stay longer, built a toilet inside their room and maintained their room regularly.

The cost of the room varied but most of the people paid about IRs 600-1000 per month for a room. It most cases it was a precondition to pay a deposit of IRs 5,000-15,000. The new comers often needed the support of their social networks to enable them to pay the deposit or act as a guarantee.

The room where I stayed in Laxminagar, in western sub urban Mumbai, was rented by three men from Yamgha and a neighbouring village in Palpa. There were five of us sharing the room. They were all Bahuns and they knew each other very well. Compared to the room that other Nepalis lived in, the room I had was far better with a rent of IRs 1500, excluding the electricity bill. It was a relatively larger room with two beds, a kitchen in one corner and a space for taking a bath and cleaning dishes in another corner. There was an old cable television as a source of entertainment and it was possible to watch more than 30 television channels. The room had a fan to cope with the steel roof in the Mumbai heat.

A few men who worked as watchmen were given free accommodation in pump houses or in a small room, usually under the stairs, provided by the owner of the building. A pump house was a generic term used to talk about a small room located within the premises of the building which was used as a store for the water pump or a

general store room. Such accommodation was usually free and they did not have to pay for electricity or water, but they had to cook their own food. Similarly those who worked in hotels and restaurants were usually provided with a common room or the floor in the dining space arranged by the employer, where 6-8 people lived together. The employer provided them with food. In lieu of free accommodation and food, the people who worked as helpers in restaurants were paid less money. Those who worked as domestic workers in residences often slept in the kitchen or in a corridor. They slept after everybody in the house slept and woke up early in the morning before everybody else woke up.

Except for those who were provided with a meal by the employer, others cooked their own food in their room. Those who stayed together cooked together and shared the cost. For those with families, it was the women who did the household chores just like in their home back in Nepal. The wives of these Nepali men did not work outside, except for a few who worked as part time domestic helpers in a nearby housing block. The families with children sent them for schooling to a nearby school. A few women I spoke to were scared when their husbands went to work, especially at night. Thus, social support in the neighbourhood was very important for the women to ensure their security.

All this showed that despite the difficult living conditions as discussed above, life in Mumbai could be better understood by looking at the involvement of these men in consumption. However, it is worth noting that the exposure to a contrasting way of life with people who lived in high rise buildings, travelled by car and worked in offices, was a sight that very few of these men would have seen in their villages.

Consumption of goods and experiences

Within the constrained life of Mumbai, from the perspective of these men, the movement to India was related to excitement and an opportunity to explore a distant culture and place. For instance Mumbai was a city of big buildings, public transport, brothels, 'beer bars', freedom, and the film industry. The experience of men in

Mumbai showed that their work offered them an opportunity to earn some money to meet the basic necessities of their households and fulfil their obligations as good sons or good men. Working in cities like Mumbai offered these men an opportunity to become involved in consumption of what was considered as modern goods and experiences. Thus, one way to characterize life in Mumbai was the transformation that these men went through in their consumption both in Mumbai and back home. Let me provide some examples of consumption practices.

A particular aspect of life in Mumbai was to go sight seeing to different parts of the city where there were high rise buildings, places of tourist attractions like the Gateway of India, the sea beach and occasionally to see the shooting of films or television serials in studios or outside. Commonly known as *ghumna jāne*, this involved exploring new places for entertainment. Among the people who stayed in sub urban Mumbai, men often went on weekends to watch shooting in the film studios with the help of their friends working there. A few men worked in the film industry or at least came with the hope that they would find some work there. A few young men spoke of the desire to work in 'shooting' and watched shooting closely. It was possible that some of these desires were heightened by talk of development, particularly by the proliferation of glamorous images of modern places and manhood. Such images were reinforced by success stories of a few individuals, like Dilip.

Dilip aged 48, was a role model for many of the younger men who considered movement to India as a chance to improve their socio-economic situation. Though Dilip went to India to escape from police arrest on the charge of attempted murder, after several years of work in the film industry, he had become a hero in the eyes of many people in the entire area. His police case was settled later after signing a mutual agreement with the complainant. He worked as a personal assistant to a producer and earned about IRs 40-50,000 a month. Dilip even managed to act in a television serial that was shown in Doordarshan, the Indian national television channel. He had assisted several people by arranging jobs in the film industry in Mumbai. Whenever he came home, he always had 3-4 people around him who were

provided with free drinks and spoke of the opportunities in Mumbai. He wore a big gold chain, several gold rings and travelled home in an air conditioned train. Each time he returned to Mumbai a few young men joined him with the hope finding work in the film industry. People often cited the examples of Hum Bahadur and Raju Pandey for whom Dilip arranged work as helpers and who were working as an assistant production manager and a make up man. In the film studio, I met Bir Bahadur who worked as helper on the set arranged by Dilip. His job was to respond to orders during shooting, mainly loading up, unloading, and shifting heavy gear. Bir Bahadur's work was quite hard for the payment of IRs 150/per day on the days he worked but he hoped to be picked by the producer for a better paid job some day. When Dilip last returned from home he brought back Sanjaya, a married man of 30, who was looking for either a good work opportunity or to start a small business in partnership with Dilip's son. After returning from a three year contract in Malaysia the previous year, Sanjaya wanted to invest the money he had saved (NRs 400,000) in business but saw little possibility of this due to the escalating violence in Nepal. Staying in Nepal had meant that his savings were quickly getting spent on day to day expenses. After speaking to Dilip, he was hoping to start a small shop or a restaurant in Mumbai where he could invest his savings and earn some money. As he was married, he did not want to do contract work again which meant no frequent leave to go home but instead he was considering the possibility of going to Mumbai. The success stories from Mumbai and support provided by people like Dilip and Kamal Nath (discussed earlier) meant that young men in the village saw possibilities of manhood in Mumbai. While people seemed aware that movement to India did not automatically result in success and happiness, it at least opened up possibilities for it.

Life in Mumbai provided these men with an opportunity to explore freedom away from the strict norms observed in the village. On a Sunday a group of friends (five Bahuns, 3 Magars and 1 Chetri) met in the room of my host in Mumbai. This was called enjoyment (*ramāilo garne*). The gathering on a Sunday was characterized by the consumption of alcohol (beer) and meat (chicken) for hours in the room. Due to strict social norms and recently due to a campaign against alcohol led by the Maoists and women's groups, it was difficult to find such a scene back in the village,

particularly for the Bahuns. The cost of the party that I attended was certainly somewhere between IRs 3000 – IRs 4000 in total. I suspect that it would not have been possible for these men to spend even hundreds of rupees on a party back in the village that they spent partying in the small room in the slum in Mumbai. The gathering went on for more than 5-6 hours where they drank beer, ate meat, played music, danced and talked to each other about their work, life, loves and problems. Occasionally the gathering took place in the 'Beer Bar' close to where they lived, which cost more money than what they would spend in the room. Though expensive, the 'Beer Bar' was spoken about as a place where they could not just drink and talk, but also have the opportunity to be served drinks by girls and watch erotic dances. Bimal, a married Bahun man in his late 30s, self employed as a real estate agent was known for visiting different Beer Bars in the city where he was known for spending thousands of rupees. The scene was revealing in the sense that it showed the possibility of being involved in consumption practices without any restrictions. Such gatherings provided these men with intimacy and an opportunity to meet each other.

Though a few people I spoke to denied that they went to brothels for sex, they spoke of a few people having girl friends, extra marital affairs and visiting brothels on a regular basis. There was certainly an opportunity for these men to be involved in relationships, particularly when they were away from home, and involvement in relationships provided a rare opportunity for intimacy and it was a matter of pride for a man to assert his manhood. Unlike in their home village, it was possible to see males and females holding hands, walking in the streets and even kissing in public parks and at the sea side.

Let us consider the particular context in which the migrants spoke about their sexual behaviour when I was present.

On a Sunday afternoon I met four Nepali migrants, mostly in their early and mid 20s, in a local tea stall in Goregaun. The stall was a place where the migrants from Laxminagar (name of the slum area) mostly met each other over a 'cutting tea'. The conversation started casually about work, home, friends, mobile phone, cinema etc,

and then slowly moved onto love, marriage, sex, alcohol, beer bars, sex workers and brothels. Of the four of them, one of them was married, while the others were unmarried. During the conversation each of them teased the other. Teasing Krishna, who recently got married when he went home, Deepak asked him if he was missing his wife, 'Dai (elder brother), seems, you are missing *bhāuju* (sister in law). Is it becoming too difficult? You should bring *bhāuju* to Mumbai, then you will have a good time.' Deepak asked Krishna, if he had been busy with someone the Sunday before as Krishna had not been seen around, the others giggled including Krishna himself. Krishna replied saying, 'What do you mean by busy? I just went to meet a few friends in Bhandup. You can ask Shiva (a friend of Krishna) if you don't believe. I heard that you were having fun. Who is that?' Hari then said, 'What is going on? You all seem to have fun. You guys should also think about us? What do you say Ramesh? These boys are going to different places without informing us. Anyway, we will see when our turn comes.' Deepak said, 'Boys! I had fun. I went with three this week. I went to a famous bar to drink and then took one girl to my room. If you guys tell me where you all went, I can take you guys with me next time to the bar. When we are born as a man, you should have fun. This particular scene showed the context in which men talk about sex and sexuality in their daily life.

One of the things that struck me about Nepali men working in Mumbai was their use of mobile phones. Almost all the Nepalis I met had a mobile phone, except for those who worked as a domestic helper. Whenever I began to talk to them a mobile phone would ring with the ring tone of the latest Bollywood song. While having a mobile phone enabled them to be in touch with each other, it was also very easy for their family members back in Nepal to make phone calls to them. Whenever I sought a favour from my informants to speak to other Nepalis, my informants always took out a mobile phone and made the phone call. The difference in the use was visible when we consider how easy it was for these men to talk to their family but, it was a long walk for the people in the village to reach the nearest telephone service. The widespread use of mobile phones shows the desire of these men to consume modern goods. These phones were available in the shops with the starting price of IRs 2500 or less and it took about IRs 100 to get the phone connected to the network. The use

of mobile phones along with their newly adopted interest in cricket, was visible when there was a sudden interest in the latest score in the middle of a meeting of a local Nepali organisation to resolve a dispute between two Nepalis involved in a fight.

Television and the movies were popular forms of entertainment. Television was so common that, depending on their income, men often had cable television supplying more than 30 channels in their rooms. The men with whom I stayed often watched movies, entertainment serials, news or cricket. They also owned a video player which was used to watch movies borrowed from a video parlour nearby. Television was put on from the time one entered the room till the time one left. It was considered usual to go to the movie theatres whenever they were free. Some young men told me that they never missed a newly released movie. They had up to date knowledge about the movies, movie stars and gossip. It was possible for them to watch Nepali movies played in selected movie theatres in Mumbai. Occasionally people spoke of going to watch erotic movies in some of the theatres.

Whenever possible, these men met each other at a convenient place. A tea stand in Laxminagar was a place where Nepalis from the same locality met each other over 'cutting tea'[94]. There was a newspaper stand next to the tea stall sponsored by Shiv Sena. Apart from different Hindi and Marathi newspapers, the stand also included two Nepali newspapers ('Nepal News' and 'Nepal Sandesh') which were sponsored (paid) by a Nepali watchman working in a housing colony in front of the newspaper stand. These newspapers contained news from Nepal, including notices and advertisements of different things targeted at Nepalis, and so the men often got into conversation about the political situation in Nepal and events taking place in Mumbai. These newspapers also carried information about Nepali movies, community events, meetings, announcements from associations and advertisement for jobs among other things. Such gatherings also provided these men with the chance to become involved in political debate and mobilisation.

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[94] Half cup of tea, served in the street corner tea stall in Mumbai.

Those who read the news from Nepal and engaged in the discussion afterwards indicated their participation in the political processes from a distance. Many of these men had taken membership of different types of migrant organisations and took part in their various activities. Some of these migrant organisations were sister organisations of the mainstream political parties in Nepal, others were activist or welfare oriented organisations with their primary aim to work for the rights and welfare of the Nepali population in Mumbai.

At the time of my fieldwork in Mumbai, the political life in Nepal was reflected in the demonstrations in Azad Maidan in Mumbai both in support of the Maoists and against them. More than 1,000 Nepalis gathered in Azad Maidan and chanted slogans against the Royal coup in Nepal. Members of these organisations spoke proudly about providing support to the political parties in Nepal (through cash or by offering shelter and food when political leaders and party cadres fled from Nepal). The organisation of the migrant associations was quite structured from the national top level to the area level in the small locality like Laxminagar. These organisations were also involved in organising different activities, like inviting Nepali artists to perform at ticketed events, celebrating festivals like *dasaĩ* or *krishna janmāstami* and some judicial activities like dealing with disputes between Nepalis. In one instance, I encountered a case where a local branch of a migrant organisation was dealing with a dispute between a man of 58 working as a watchman and a young man of 28 working in a hotel. The dispute had occurred after the watchman had beaten the young man on the charge of stealing newspapers from the newsstand, which was sponsored by him. The judicial meeting chaired by the local secretary concluded the case by saying that, while it was not correct in the first place to steal the newspapers, the use of physical force was considered unacceptable. All this showed that Nepali men were organising themselves in Mumbai under different associations that not only worked to protect them but it also showed their participation in the political life of Nepal through various organisations and activities. However, such development is not new given the the historical evidence that Nepalis in India have organised themselves and contributed to the political movements in Nepal (Chalmers, 2003).

Within the constrained working life in Mumbai, the men participated in different activities and involved themselves in various consumption practices that were instrumental in their conception of manhood.

Movement and masculinities

I have tried to contribute to emerging scholarship on movement and masculinities, by exploring the meaning and experience of the movement of Nepali men who took on new social roles and responsibilities when moving to Mumbai. I showed that movement to India impacted on what it meant to be a man, what was appropriate masculine behaviour and how men were categorized in the hills of Nepal. My argument is that earning money for household subsistence, experiencing distant places and consuming 'modern' commodities was an important feature of defining manhood in the context of the western hills in Nepal, which was made possible by the movement of men away from their village.

Following the work of Osella and Osella on migration to the Gulf (Osella and Osella, 2000), it is possible to examine how mobility is integrated into the local systems of masculine identity. People in the village spoke of different ways of categorising men who went to work in India i.e. *lāhure*, *chāure*, *phāltu* and *jāgire*, each of these referring to different types of men in the local context. Furthermore, as I showed earlier, these categories had become so integrated into village life that they were used to refer to people who had never moved out of the village.

Though the practice of going to work in India was largely spoken of as 'useless' and exploitative when compared to other forms of mobility for work (e.g. *bidesh tira jāne* or *jāgir khāna jāne*), it provided an opportunity for young men to experiment with the pleasures and possibilities of manhood, through new forms of commodity consumption, entertainment and urban autonomy. It also offered an escape from difficult socio-economic, cultural and familial situations and offered an opportunity for young men to experience a distant place, earn and remit money home to fulfil

their obligations as men and try their luck for upward socio-economic mobility of their households.

Examining the decision making of going to work in India, I showed that the experience of men did not fit within the narrow framework of economic rationality, nor could it be explained solely by the neo-Marxist perspective on mobility, where these men are treated as passive reactors. Examining the experience of men who went to work in India showed that their reasons for going had complex socio-cultural dimension. Though economic considerations did shape men's movement to work in India, I suggested that such economic considerations and the diverse range of explanations that men provided, could be understood within the framework of ideas of masculinity. In other words, from the perspective of men from the hills of Nepal, movement to work in India could be understood as a movement towards construction of manhood, a process of becoming a masculine being.

However, there was a tension between what Nepali men desire and hope for in terms of their obligations of becoming a complete man, who could earn money to contribute to the household subsistence, and the way in which they encounter the other side of life in Mumbai. In particular, the constraints due to poor working and living conditions in Mumbai and the exploitation during travel, came as a surprise to these men. Low wages, poor living conditions, difficulties in travel and separation from the family meant that most of them found it difficult to realise their dreams.

Further, masculinity in the patriarchal family and community context that prized the authority and respect of men was often thrown into crisis under the difficult conditions in the journey, destination and their separation from family (wife, children and parents). This was an assault in their male identity. Therefore, I argue that under the difficult and exploitative conditions of work in India, masculinity was both reconstituted and compromised by men's movement to India. Thus, for these men, there was often a tension between the material and symbolic pressure to go to work in India in order to earn money and run the household and the emotional pressure of being away from their families therefore being unable to look after their parents, wife

or children. In Palpa, men were expected to move and the masculinity of those who did not move was called into question. Paradoxically, men might have their masculinity stripped from them once they began to work in India under the prevailing difficult and exploitative conditions.

Despite all these constraints it was possible to see these men exercising their agency and reconstructing their identity through their consuming experience, goods and images that were found in Mumbai. These consumption practices had an impact on how these men were spoken about, imagined and categorized in the local context in the hills of Nepal.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the meanings and experiences of movement to India having social and cultural dimensions, particularly within the framework of masculinity. I have argued that movement to India should be viewed as a part of hill men's life and livelihoods that has both a socio-cultural and an economic dimension to it. I was particularly interested in the socio-cultural dimensions of movement to India as was evident in the local meanings of movement to India that had particular effect in the ways manhood was defined (Osella and Osella, 2000). The concept of manhood and masculinity appropriately articulated the decision making, work experience and how men's identities were reconstituted through the process of their movement. Though I am unable to present ethnographic evidence, it is possible that the men who do not move may be under pressure to perform other ways of asserting their masculine identity (e.g. joining the Maoist rebels). One important implication of mobility for masculinity was that there was a contradiction between the men's desire and obligation to move and the actual experience of movement, under the difficult and exploitative working and living conditions in Mumbai and the journey that placed strain on their manhood. However, though working and living under marginal conditions, these men were exposed to new forms of consumerism which was visible in their use of mobile phones, clothing, entertainment, friendhship and the way they manage their money and free time

Although this form of mobility challenged the marginality of village and life in the village or contributed to the reconstruction of men's identities, their experience in the city often reaffirmed their distance from a modern being and might threaten their masculinity. It was possible that the experience of mobility and its role in reconstructing gender identities helped to sustain conditions that encouraged a steady flow of men to work in India.

Plate 6.1 Two men travelling at the border town of Sunauli, on their way to Mumbai, Sunauli, Nepal

Plate 6.2 A busy bus station, Butwal, Nepal

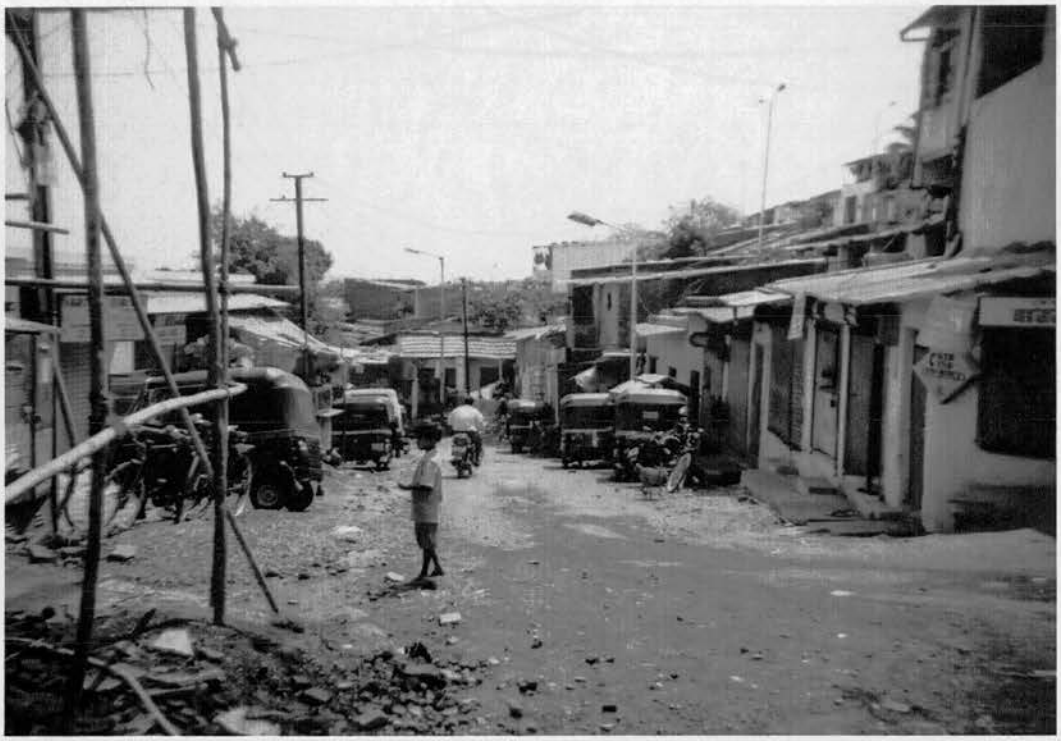

Plate 6.3 A slum area in Mumbai where Nepali migrants live

Plate 6.4 A meeting of Nepali migrants discussing a dispute between two men, Mumbai

Chapter VII

Pathologies of Mobility:

HIV/AIDS and Nepali male migrants in Mumbai

With an open border between India and Nepal, there was a large-scale movement of population between these countries. A glimpse of the human movement across the Indo-Nepal border at Sunauli was enough to give me an impression that a large number of people from either side of the country crossed the border every day. If such an image seemed quite common, so was the HIV/AIDS intervention activated by the movement of men from the hills of Nepal to Indian cities like Mumbai. Among the policy makers the concern was more on women as carriers of HIV/AIDS in much of the 1990's (i.e. with the discourse on trafficking of girls) and male labour migration did not feature centrally in the AIDS discourse. But since 1998-99, within the discourse of mobility and HIV/AIDS, there had been a major shift to represent male labour migrants as carriers of the epidemic. Since the end of the 1990s there had been more programming, rapid assessment and policy discourse that viewed Nepali male labour migrants from the hills to Mumbai as potential carriers of HIV/AIDS.

Before I proceed further, let me clarify some theoretical points of departure. Though this chapter emerged as a response to the growing concern and much discussed relationship that existed between mobility of male labour migrants and HIV/AIDS, it is not an attempt to come out with explanations to contribute in this policy debate. Rather, it brings together and analyses a set of discourses on labour migration and HIV/AIDS in a particular ethnographic context. Adopting the insights offered by the concept of 'governmentality' (Inda, 2006), my purpose is to provide a critique of the pathologizing discourses of labour migration which focused on the migrants and their 'aberrant' sexuality. In the context of dominance, significance and the complicated history of international development and public health interventions in Nepal and

elsewhere, I am keen to address several questions—how might we understand the development discourse on HIV/AIDS that pathologized male labour migration and migrants? What were its implications? How were these pathologies reflected in the actual development practices? What might this tell us about the relationship between policy and practice? In the context of such authoritative discourses around the migrants and their sexual behaviour, how might we understand the response of the Nepali migrant workers to such discourses surrounding their life?

In order to answer these questions, I drew on data collected from different influential international development and humanitarian agencies working in the field of male labour migration and HIV/AIDS, often by interacting with their staff and consultants, reading their rapid assessment and programme documents, and looking at their web-pages (both national and international). The policies and programme documents of these agencies were obtained by requesting them directly from these agencies and using libraries or their web-pages. I carried out both formal and informal interviews with advisors, programme managers, and consultants working in different agencies implementing these policies at different levels, to understand the discourse beyond the face value of the policy documents. Furthermore, I drew on my ethnographic fieldwork among Nepali male migrants in Mumbai and my journey with a group of migrants from Palpa to Mumbai, to present how they evaluate, experience and perceive their life and livelihoods in the face of such authoritative discourse.

In the following paragraphs, I outline the fear and the policy response activated by HIV/AIDS in Nepal. This will be followed by examining the shift in the HIV/AIDS discourse from female sex workers to male labour migrants and its implications. The next section discusses the theoretical construction of male labour migrants as objects of knowledge and intervention which reveals the complex, yet systematic context in which such production of knowledge took place. I show the possibility of examining the effects of a shift in the development discourse on the behaviour of implementing agencies, which was subject to changes in global development discourses that were transmitted to them via a range of mechanisms, consultants, reports and conditions of funding. I then present an ethnography of the HIV/AIDS programme targeting male

labour migrants as implemented in Mumbai that showed a complex relationship between these two. Towards the conclusion of this chapter, I present how the migrants themselves responded to the project and the dominant discourses that pathologize their life and livelihoods.

Fear of HIV/AIDS and the response

Nepal diagnosed its first cases of AIDS in July 1988 in an overseas tourist and later in the same year in a Nepali woman, who returned to Nepal from Mumbai after working there as a 'prostitute'. The much cited report titled 'Activities of National AIDS Prevention and Control Project' states that the reported HIV/AIDS cases in the country were two in 1989, increasing to five in 1990. Within the next two years i.e. 1991-1992, the cases increased to 26 and 77 respectively (Guruvacharya, 1992). By 1993, 195 cases had been reported to the Ministry of Health. The experts warned that the number was projected to reach cumulatively 100,000 by the year 2000 (Subedi et al., 1994). Likewise David Seddon, an academic who often used the term 'crisis' in his work[95], proclaimed AIDS as a coming crisis for Nepal in two academic articles (Seddon, 1998, Seddon, 1995). As of early 1997 it was projected that there were from 15,000 - 20,000 HIV infected persons in Nepal with a large proportion (up to 50 percent) of those infections acquired in India (FHI, 1998). Similarly, as of March 2004, a total of 3,529 HIV infection cases were reported, of which 715 were found to have AIDS (UNAIDS/NCASC, 2004). A document titled 'Health Profile Nepal: HIV/AIDS' released by USAID in May 2005 states, 'It has been estimated that, if prevalence continues to increase at the current rate, AIDS could be the major cause of death in Nepal by 2010' (USAID, 2005).

These statistics, outlined above, showed that the numerical impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic had not been as dramatic as anticipated in earlier reports. My purpose in this chapter is not to attempt to revise the calculation of HIV/AIDS cases; rather I have outlined these 'calculations' and 'predictions' of crisis as they seem to provide

[95] The two publications where crisis appears in the title are Nepal in Crisis (Blaikie, Seddon et. al. 1980) and HIV/AIDS in Nepal: a coming crisis (Seddon 1998)

a vital window to look at the perceptions of crisis engendered within the discourse on the HIV/AIDS programmes in Nepal.

Since the diagnosis of the first case in 1988, there had been a growing response (policy, research and programmes) from the side of the Government of Nepal and NGOs, with the support of international development and public health institutions. At the beginning of the 1990s, there was a flood of money into Nepal in the name of HIV/AIDS from international agencies, which coincided with a mushrooming of NGOs. Back in 1992, AmFAR (American Foundation for AIDS Research) received 80 applications for funding from 'AIDS NGOs' in Nepal. In 1995, Seddon wrote:

> There is a real danger that the prospect of an epidemic will attract organisations and individuals whose interests lie more in the resources that are now being made increasingly available to NGOs for work on HIV/AIDS related issues and will not serve the interests of those who are directly or indirectly threatened by the disease (Seddon, 1995: 9).

In the same year of the diagnosis of the first case, Government of Nepal launched the first National AIDS Prevention and Control Programme (NAPCP). This programme, known as the Short-Term Plan for AIDS Prevention and Control, was followed by the First Medium Term Plan 1990-92 and then by the Second Medium Term Plan for AIDS Prevention and Control in Nepal (1993-97). As I showed above, initial publications represented HIV/AIDS as an 'anticipated' or 'expected' social problem in Nepal. A reading of the initial response to HIV/AIDS in the late 1980's and the early 1990's showed that it was to be found in 'other' countries, mainly in Africa and USA. The response thus focused on raising public awareness of the disease in Nepal, which was done by using a mass education and awareness campaign.

Most of these IEC materials were translated from English to Nepali and were circulated to the public without much research. The initial public health and development response to HIV/AIDS could thus be viewed as a response to fear of 'infection' and 'fatality', mostly associated with prostitution, sex and drug use.

In 1993, Nepal saw two major responses from AIDSCAP, a USAID funded programme of FHI (FHI), and AmFAR, a US based non-profit making organisation

with funding of $ 3 million and $ 2 million US respectively for the period of 1993-1997 (Hannum, 1997, Pigg, 2001a, Pigg, 2001b).

In the light of massive donor interventions, the government of Nepal adopted a national policy for AIDS prevention with 12 key policy statements in 1995. Based on the National Policy, a 'Strategic Plan for HIV and AIDS in Nepal' covering 1997 to 2001 was developed and adopted. This aimed at operationalizing the national policy and defining key activities for each policy objective. Although the strategic plan contained a number of activities aimed at the prevention of a rapid spread of the epidemic, only a limited number of them were actually implemented. The strategic plan sought to broaden the response to other sectors beyond health and integrate HIV/AIDS concerns within them. The open border between Nepal and India and widespread poverty were recognized as opportunities for the spread of the infection in the country. The strategic plan was revised in 2002 to respond to the changing epidemiological situation.

Millennium Development Goals put forward by United Nations and Nepal's Tenth Five Year plan identified HIV/AIDS as a cross cutting issue affecting national development. The overall objective of Nepal's strategy for HIV/AIDS aimed to contain the epidemic in Nepal. The strategy emphasized prevention as the mainstay for an effective response. It also highlighted the need for care and support for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Considering the dynamic nature of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the strategy acknowledged the importance of accurately tracking the epidemic and monitoring the effectiveness of interventions (UNAIDS/NCASC, 2004).

Unlike the former response which popularized HIV/AIDS and instilled fear, the response in the following years was a more systematic and biomedical one. The new set of preventive messages contained information on the virus and on modes of transmission, and there was more research and planning of communication strategies and a more aggressive response from donor communities. The initial response was based on the assumption that sexual behaviour is rational, thus much focus was on

providing appropriate information which would lead to behaviour change. The response from the development agencies in the latter years drew a relationship between HIV/AIDS and under-development and consequently several development organisations had responded to HIV/AIDS as a 'developmental issue'. Development and humanitarian responses to HIV/AIDS in Nepal came primarily from international agencies which were popularized through the mushrooming of 'AIDS NGOs' and thus it could be argued that the public agenda on HIV/AIDS and public health response to it was set by the donors. Since the mid 1990's there had been an overwhelming response to HIV/AIDS from UN agencies, bilateral agencies (e.g. USAID), multilateral agencies (e.g. the World Bank) and a large number of INGOs and NGOs. In 1996 an inventory showed that 21 separate government offices, 12 multi-lateral and bilateral donors, 28 INGOs and 45 NGOs were involved in AIDS related activities (Pigg, 2001a). According to data available from the United Mission to Nepal in 2002, there were more than 100 NGOs working in the field of HIV/AIDS in Nepal (Beine, 2002). At the time of my fieldwork, I found it quite impossible to get an exact number of the NGOs and INGOs who were working in the field of HIV/AIDS, primarily because most of the NGOs in one way or the other had integrated HIV/AIDS in their programmes in a rather opportunist way. It was interesting to observe that in a short span of time virtually all the development institutions working in Nepal had included HIV/AIDS in their programme and responded to the threat of the epidemic in different ways. There were now more actors, more programmes and more policies. Following Foucault, such a concern in the security of the populations from the threat of HIV/AIDS fits very well with the concept of governmentality (Foucault, 1991, Inda, 2005). As discussed in the introduction of the thesis, the dimension of 'reasons' shows the epistemological character of truth making and problem making so as to allow for governance (Inda, 2005). With this general background, in the following paragraphs, I shall discuss the response of the development and public health institutions to mobility and HIV/AIDS.

Shifting discourses: from female sex workers to male migrant workers

Mobility and mobile populations had often been represented as objects of concern and an underlying contributor to the spread of HIV/AIDS in Nepal. Pigg declares:

> In the discussion throughout the 1990s of the potential for a major HIV epidemic in Nepal, male labour migration was noted but eclipsed by the overwhelming preoccupation with sex work, drug and girls trafficking. There has been much more attention paid to estimating the number of girls trafficked to India, the prevalence of HIV infection among the prostitutes in Bombay, and the number of clients entertained by Nepali sex workers than to understanding the movement of Nepali men, their lives when they are away from home and the frequency with which they return to their families in Nepal. Young women too leave for quite similar reasons, but their migration is treated quite differently in the discourse about AIDS. Their migration is sexualised; their work in carpet factories and domestic services is seen as linked to trafficking and prostitution. A statistic about the percentage of Bombay prostitutes with HIV, cited again and again, carries ominous reverberations, while a statistic about the movement of male migrant labour back and forth across the border between Indian and Nepal lacks the same resonance. Men get HIV in India from prostitutes, whereas returning women bring HIV into Nepal (Pigg, 2002 :122-123).

While Pigg seemed right in pointing out that the focus was more on women as carriers of HIV/AIDS in much of the 1990's and male labour migration did not feature centrally in the AIDS discourse, there had been a major shift to represent male labour migrants as carriers of the epidemic since 1998-99. As discussed in Chapter IV, labour migrants had been problematic for the development institutions as their programmes were very much focussed within geographically defined communities. At the same time working with the cross border migrants remained a politically difficult task. There was a long standing avoidance of this issue until the latest conceptual invention that associated the global and regional fear of HIV/AIDS with migration, in particular labour migrants. This invention made it possible for development organisations to work with the migrants at their village of origin, the transit/border and the destination without making the 'political' felt. The issue has not, however, been politicized (Ferguson, 1994).

The vast number of male migrants in the contemporary world expands the scope of development organisations to work with them. As the number of male labour migrants seems much higher than female sex workers, such a discursive shift has important implications for systematically representing the sexuality of male labour migrants as aberrant and instilling an alarming fear that the 'diseased' male migrants pose to the society as a whole.

How had this discourse on HIV/AIDS and mobility changed through time? A study done by Valley Research Group (VARG) for UNDP in 1993 represented the mobile population, both men and women out-migrating from their villages to work in cities, as a challenge for the fight against HIV/AIDS.

> Persistent unemployment of youths and elders in the country has forced a large number of people to go abroad in search of work. When they return to the homeland they would bring not only the remittances but also the HIV infection which would lead to devastating AIDS epidemic in the country. (VARG, 1993: 49)

This report also related the threat of HIV/AIDS to the out-migration of girls from rural areas into cities, in particular in the carpet industries, to get better work opportunities. The trafficking of girls and woman from Nepal to India was given as a great risk for the spread of HIV/AIDS in Nepal. While this report made a note of male labour migration as a matter of concern, it did not deal with it in detail.

The AIDSCAP programme which began in the year 1993 considered mobility to be the prime focus of their programme but male labour migration did not explicitly feature in their programmes. Its primary target populations were women engaging in commercial sex and men engaging in high-risk sexual practices, particularly transport workers, migrant labourers, businessmen, the military, police and college students. Although migrant labourers were represented as one of the primary target populations in the project the focus of the project was more on sex workers, truckers, and drug users along the highways and small towns respectively (FHI, 1998). The AmFAR programme which began in the same year made an attempt to fight HIV/AIDS through information, education, and access to means of prevention. The programme looked at individual and collective vulnerability to HIV/AIDS through

literacy and other skills needed for alternative income generation. The programme of AmFAR did not deal with male labour migration separately (Hannum, 1997, Pigg, 2001b).

An article in 1994, entitled 'HIV/AIDS in Nepal: An Update', stated that returned Nepali girls from brothels in India, migration of young men from rural areas to cities and growing prostitution in Nepal were the main reasons behind the potential threat of HIV/AIDS in Nepal. Under the factors contributing to HIV/AIDS, along with others, the authors wrote:

> Trafficking of young village girls to prostitution centres, particularly India, where they are infected with HIV-once infected or ill, most of these girls return to Nepal.
> Temporary or seasonal migration often rural youth to urban centres within Nepal and to other countries for employment where they are most likely to engage in high risk behaviour such as visiting commercial sex workers (Subedi et al., 1994: 211)

HIV/AIDS and mobility also featured in the academic work of David Seddon, who argued that human mobility between Nepal and India could be a central risk factor for the threat of an epidemic in Nepal. He wrote:

> Nepal's open border with India (where HIV infection rates are rapidly rising) and the high level of physical mobility within Nepal and abroad, associated with widespread labour migration and encouraged by the recent development of road transport, means that there is a real danger of a rapid spread of HIV within Nepal. The major means of infection is through heterosexual encounters involving male clients and female sex workers, but other sections of the population are also at risk from infection. Media attention has focused on female sex workers, particularly those who have worked abroad in India, but the issue is far broader than this. Social and economic factors forcing or encouraging young men and women to seek employment away from home underlie the widespread growth of the "sex industry" and the "trafficking" of girls and young women (Seddon, 1998: 35).

Seddon added:

> Widespread poverty and the lack of local sources of income force men and women to migrate from the rural areas of Nepal in search of employment. Many of these migrants have been drawn into the rapidly expanding nexus of sex industry in Nepal and India, either as commercial sex workers or (in case of male migrant workers) as their clients, and have been infected with sexually transmitted diseases including the HIV virus (Seddon, 1998: 36).

The work[96] of Seddon with two other Nepali scholars for DFID and the World Bank, towards the end of 1990s, on labour migration and remittances proved instrumental in bringing more attention to the debate on male labour out-migration from the western hills in Nepal in the development discourse. The newly prominent debate on labour migration and remittances also initiated a debate on risks associated with labour out-migration and the risk of HIV/AIDS was represented as one of the major risks associated with it.

A rapid assessment by three consultants associated with a consultancy organisation named Centre for Research and Environment Health and Population Activities (CREHPA) for WHO in 1997-98 established the Indo-Nepal border and mobility around that area as a site of risk associated with transmission of HIV/AIDS. This study talked about the threat of HIV/AIDS in Nepal from the returned sex workers from Mumbai. In the conclusion of this study, the authors wrote, 'The design of the study was based on the assumption that migrant men would be more likely to engage in extramarital sex than resident men' (Tamang et al., 2001: 208). The authors suggested that temporary migrants were unable to make permanent relationships with local women but only with prostitutes, and that is why migrant men were probably more at risk of HIV/AIDS infection than residents. According to the authors this should be a matter of serious concern for health policy makers. Like many rapid assessments, this study drew out some policy implications, arguing that because mobile young men were more vulnerable to contact with sex workers and might therefore be responsible for the transmission of STI and HIV/AIDS to their partners, the programmes aimed at the promotion of safer sexual practice should be targeted at such groups.

In the paragraphs above, I showed that there was a gradual shift within the discourse on HIV/AIDS towards representing male labour migrants as a major challenge in the spread of the disease. This shift was influenced by the universalising global

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[96] For details see http://www.gdnet.org/rapnet/research/studies/case_studies/Case_Study_14_Full.html (accessed on 03/03/2005)

discourses on mobility and HIV/AIDS/STI, a few influential academics and consultants working within these global development institutions and the relationships that existed between the parent organisations in global capitals and their partners in different countries around the globe. The compelling discourses that present male labour migrants as a threat to their own life and the life of others opened up an opportunity for development interventions.

Creating male labour migrants as the object of interventions

The theoretical production of Nepali male labour migrants as an object of knowledge in relation to HIV/AIDS took place inside the institutional corridors of development and public health organisations. As indicated earlier, towards the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new century, there was an emerging and more focussed discussion about labour migration and the remittances economy of Nepal led by David Seddon. This was instrumental to mainstream discussions on male labour migration and HIV/AIDS in Nepal.

In 1999, the UNDP's regional programme for South Asia responded to migration/mobility and HIV/AIDS in the region. Nepal was one of the countries participating in the initiative focussing on mobility and migration issues and their linkages to HIV/AIDS/STI.[97] The project was aimed at formulating an effective multi-sectoral policy to meet the challenges of the epidemic in the context of mobility across the region. As part of the initiative, the Nepal Institute of Development Studies (NIDS) undertook a study reviewing the policies, programmes and existing research on migration and HIV in Nepal. The founder and the president of NIDS earlier worked with David Seddon in the remittance economy study and that experience seemed instrumental in the work of NIDS in later years. At the time of my fieldwork, NIDS was emerging as one of the leading rapid assessment

[97] The other counties that participated in the program were India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

consultants and consultancies offering to work for international organisations based in Nepal in the field of migration and HIV/AIDS.

During the 1990s there was a regular demand from international agencies for rapid assessments on HIV/AIDS and male labour migration in the far west of Nepal. An inventory showed that in 2001 alone, 6 different rapid assessments on migration and HIV/AIDS were carried out in far western Nepal (UNAIDS/NCASC, 2004: 4). A study for UNDP's Participatory Planning and Management of HIV/AIDS stated that the vast majority i.e. 82 per cent of migrants, belong to the sexually active age (14-45). The majority of such migrants were married but were not accompanied by their wives. It was believed that such a situation put the migrants at an increased risk of sexual contact and thus HIV/STI infection (Paudel, 1999). In the beginning of 2001, the same consultant who worked for UNDP carried out a rapid assessment commissioned by JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) in the same district (Paudel, 2001). This assessment showed that all the men who tested positive for HIV reported to have migrated to Mumbai i.e. 10 per cent of the total sample of 99. The same study identified that more than 50 per cent of the sample were infected with STIs. Another study in Achham district, commissioned by FHI and conducted by a consultancy organisation 'New Era'[98], showed that 40 per cent of the respondents migrated internationally and of these 38 per cent migrated to Mumbai, the rest migrated to other states in India (NewEra, 2002a). Furthermore the study made recommendations for the surveillance of the migrants and to design programmes for awareness and promotion of condoms. Another study on migrants done by New Era for FHI in Kailali district, found that HIV/STI transmission from infected to non-infected partners was extremely high among the international migrants who were not using condoms during sexual intercourse with their wives (NewEra, 2002b: vi).

The assessment report drew similar recommendations as above. The repetition of somewhat similar recommendations in these rapid assessment reports was common.

[98] It is a pioneer private research organisation which was established in the year 1971. In the recent years, it has been working as a research consultancy organisation for international agencies based in Nepal.

This was not surprising given the logic and the relationship within which these assessments were carried out.

By 2002-2003, a programme for targeting male labour migrants from western Nepal had already been configured. There were not just policy makers but also a few academics setting out compelling arguments to act urgently.

During 2003-2004, a series of articles on male labour migration from far west Nepal and HIV/AIDS appeared in 'public health journals' (Poudel et al., 2003, Poudel et al., 2004b, Poudel et al., 2004a). The use of language in the titles of articles explicitly represented the Nepali male labour migrant to Mumbai as a carrier of disease. For instance: 'Mumbai Disease in Far Western Nepal: HIV Infection and syphilis among Male Migrant Returnees and Non-migrants' (Poudel et al., 2003) and 'Migration in Far Western Nepal: a time bomb for a future HIV/AIDS epidemic' (Poudel et al., 2004b), which claimed an alarming need for interventions among the policy circles. Using the metaphor of 'time bomb', the article predicted major risks associated with migration and presents a compelling need for interventions.

Nepal's strategy for HIV/AIDS (2002-2006) focused on male labour migration as an important issue for consideration in HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support programmes. The strategy document aimed to 'address the more behaviour related factors of HIV/AIDS/STI vulnerability, but at the same time advocates a holistic approach to address the broader determinants of HIV/AIDS/STI vulnerability among mobile populations' (NCASC, 2002: 19). It stated:

> Nepal's response cannot address the needs of mobile populations whilst they are outside the country. Research and targeted interventions on HIV/AIDS/STI aimed at this population whilst they are in Nepal (including their families) is a priority considering the large numbers and the high potential for a spread of HIV/AIDS/STI to the general population through their partners (NCASC, 2002: 19).

The document estimated the number of Nepali men working in India around 1 million and above and wrote, 'migration to India will undoubtedly continue to increase in coming years. Many of these men are contracting HIV/AIDS in India and

bringing it back to their wives in Nepal' (NCASC, 2002: 3). It identified the mobile population as one of the vulnerable groups and proposed 'research' to increase the understanding of the contextual factors and consequential risk behaviour which had contributed to the vulnerability of mobile populations and their families as regards STIs and HIV/AIDS. It also highlighted 'behaviour change intervention' to reduce the vulnerability of mobile populations and their families to STIs and HIV/AIDS and the 'creation of an enabling environment' to increase responsiveness to the needs of migrants in their respective host locations. All this showed that there was a more organized response on the issue.

A recent report jointly produced by UNAIDS and Ministry of Health (MoH) titled 'The HIV/AIDS/STD Situation and The National Response in Nepal', which was published in 2004, reviewed several of the rapid assessments mentioned above. It stated that the recent data on HIV/AIDS among labour migrants clearly pointed to a possible rapid spread of HIV in the rural areas of Nepal (UNAIDS/NCASC, 2004). This report treated male labour migrants as a 'bridging population' who carry HIV/AIDS from sex workers to the general population in rural areas.

With the establishment of the Global Fund, there was more money available for HIV/AIDS. Nepal's proposal to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM) was approved in 2003. The proposal to the global fund stated, 'one of the most threatening prospects of an expansive HIV epidemic in Nepal lies with the country's large male migrant population.'[99]

A more recent document released by USAID in Nepal in May 2005 considered high rates of male migration to be one of the primary factors involved in the rapid spread of HIV (USAID, 2005). This document explicitly articulated male labour migration from Nepal in relation to HIV/AIDS/STI. It wrote:

> With limited work opportunities in Nepal, and the resulting high rate of under and unemployment, the Nepalese government has established relations with neighbouring countries allowing for cross-border or migrant work opportunities for its citizens. As a result, many Nepalese migrate to

[99] http://www.theglobalfund.org/search/docs/2NEPH_71_146_full.pdf (accessed on 10/05/2005)

> India, particularly young people. Most of these migrants are young men with a low level of awareness abut risky behaviour and disease transmissions (USAID, 2005: 2).

In the above paragraphs, I outlined how the development and public health organisations had conceptualized male labour migration as an important object of knowledge for HIV/AIDS prevention programmes in Nepal. Let us now closely look at how these ideas were put into practice. This localized construction was possible through the tool of 'rapid assessments' carried out to generate a set of knowledge and draw 'rapid' recommendations for the implementation of programmes and programme documents that presented the programmes to the people working within the development and public health sector. The use of consultancy services, which were external to the organisation, for these forms of production could be understood as attempts made by these powerful organisations to seek legitimacy and validity in this process of the construction of knowledge.

An ethnography of implementation

The development and public health institutions implementing projects and programmes on HIV/AIDS and migration at the national or community level, reflected the global discourses on the issue through their parental relationship with the development institutions, based in global capitals operating universally. Let me discuss how the authoritative discourses were contextualized by the use of rapid assessments that produced knowledge for the instrumental purpose.

As described above, in the beginning of 2000, among the international agencies, including FHI Nepal, the far west became a major site for carrying out rapid assessment on male labour migration and HIV/AIDS. There was growing evidence produced by several assessments that migrants were a major threat for the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Nepal. It was at the same time as the debate on migration and remittances was heightened in Nepal, initiated by an influential academic, David Seddon.

With its extensive focus on the far west where labour migration had existed as a reality, CARE Nepal was compelled to respond.[100] The pressure was high on CARE Nepal as the global programming of CARE, especially in South East Asian countries like Vietnam and Thailand, already had programmes working with migrants. While migration was visible in CARE Nepal's work in the far west, its focus on male migrants in relation to HIV/AIDS began with a baseline survey in Bajhang district in 2001, which showed that 5 per cent of married women had heard of HIV/AIDS; 3 per cent of them knew how HIV transmission could be prevented and 1 per cent expressed that appropriate condom use could protect them from contracting HIV. The growing debate within the public health organisations on male labour out-migration from Nepal to Indian cities, mainly Mumbai, led CARE Nepal initially to run the programme named HIV/AIDS Prevention, Care and Support Project in partnership with Family Health International (FHI), which ran from February 2002 to February 2004. The goal of the project was to reduce HIV/STI related high risk behaviour among high risk groups (current and potential migrant males, and their spouses) through community based interventions. The programme was implemented in 10 Village Development Committees (VDCs) in Doti and 35 VDCs in Bajhang with a total of US$143,922. The primary target group of the project was migrant workers (male), their wives and potential migrants, while the secondary target groups included commercial sex workers and their partners. CARE later implemented another project on care and support with the support of its regional office in Bangkok. From April 2004 to February 2005, CARE Nepal commissioned a pilot project, with its internal funding from CARE Asia Regional Management Unit, on 'Understanding People Living with HIV/AIDS' (PLHA) in the same area and exploring the ways for their support in Nepal. The project had two components—*first*, conducting a study to explore the situation of PLHA, their livelihoods/coping strategies, and to identify the development needs of health care providers, *second*,

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[100] CARE Nepal began its work in Nepal in 1978. At the time of writing this thesis, CARE Nepal operates in 35 districts through 19 community development programs reaching about 2,500,000 beneficiaries in over 700 VDCs. It employs about 226 Nepali staff plus short term consultants and advisors (both Nepali and expatriates) for its work. With its goal to enable poor and vulnerable people to create and benefit from opportunities that improves their lives and ensures greater gender and caste equity, with lasting impact, a major geographical and thematic focus of CARE Nepal's work has been in the far western Nepal and on poverty and livelihoods, respectively.

piloting certain activities to promote a greater involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS in the prevention campaign. The project was focussed to strengthen the capacity of the district hospital by establishing a VCT (voluntary counselling and testing) centre; mobilize PLHA and community people through the formation of a community Support Group, and enrich the understanding through a study on stigma and discrimination attached to HIV/AIDS.

In this way since the end of the 1990s, Nepal saw a series of responses in the field of male labour migration and HIV/AIDS based in the home areas from the public health aspect and the development agencies Since then there had been a growing concern among public health professionals, based in Kathmandu, about the need to work with Nepali migrants in Mumbai, if the impact of the epidemic was to be reduced. This thinking reflected the global debate around mobility and HIV/AIDS at that time, when HIV/AIDS was declared as a disease without borders and not just a national but a regional issue. With an understanding that working with the migrant at home was not enough and there was a need to work directly with Nepali migrants in the destination, FHI began to look for possibilities of working with Nepali migrants in Mumbai.[101] This resulted in 'Sathi Nepal', a joint project of FHI Nepal and FHI India. It came into effect with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) signing the memorandum of understanding with FHI and USAID in the year 2004. Implemented by TISS, the project aimed 'to reduce the incidence of HIV transmission among Nepali migrants and their sexual partners through lowering the vulnerability to and risk for HIV transmission'. It aimed to reduce the vulnerability to STI/HIV and

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[101] Established in 1971, Family Health International is a US based international public health organisation, conducting research and programs in more than 70 countries in the world. Since 1993, FHI has collaborated with His Majesty's Government of Nepal HMG/N on HIV/AIDS prevention and impact reduction. AIDSCAP I and II (1993-2002) and IMPACT (2003-2007) are the two major programs implemented by FHI Nepal. From 2001-2002, FHI and 20 NGO partners implemented the Nepal Initiative for harm reduction developed by USAID, DFID, AusAID, UNDP and UNAIDS. FHI Nepal's work includes: behaviour change interventions, condom promotion and community based social marketing, mass media communications, evaluation, surveillance, including behavioural surveillance surveys (BSS) and qualitative studies, policy support, sexually transmitted infection (STI) management, cross border collaboration, reduction of stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS, voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) and care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS, and their families. Under the program 'Safe Highways, Safe Cities and Safe Migration' FHI Nepal works along all major transport routes, in remote hill communities, in Kathmandu and Pokharā, and in the Terāi.

promote access to care and support services among male Nepali migrants in Mumbai and Thane districts of Maharashtra.

While describing the institutions and the social life of the projects and the professionals, I shall discuss the genesis of one such intervention by drawing on ethnographic data on the project, named Sathi Nepal, as it was implemented in Mumbai.

Contextualising the discourse: politics of rapid assessments

As highlighted earlier, the rapid assessment served the purpose of the implementing agency as it legitimized the interventions by providing justification at the local level and, to an extent, addresses the concern of policy scientists who were interested in cultural appropriateness or managerial issues of the project. The social production of knowledge on the migrants in the local context took place with explicit and implicit agreement between the development agency and the consultants and staff, who engaged in this process of the production of rapid knowledge.

In light of the fact that very little data existed on the risk behaviour of Nepali migrants in Nepal, it was jointly agreed by FHI Nepal and FHI India and the USAID Mission that a rapid assessment was required to better understand the situation of Nepali migrants in Mumbai. Specific emphasis was to be on their risk behaviour and to assess the capacity of the existing organisations to implement the proposed project. In the words of a project official the project needed more conclusive social and behaviour data on the targeted population, and a suitable organisation to implement the project. The research team included a consultant as the Principal Investigator, who had worked for FHI India in 2001 in a mapping study of Nepali migrants in Mumbai, Pune Delhi and Bangalore for STI/HIV prevalence, and two field researchers. Before I began my PhD at the University of Edinburgh, I worked as a short term consultant along with technical staff at FHI India office in the design of the assessment tools and training of the field researchers. My involvement in the rapid assessment was for a period of 10 days when I worked with the Principal

Investigator and the two field researchers in Mumbai, primarily developing the research tools and visiting a locality in Mumbai for pre-testing of the tools. The rapid assessment included in-depth interviews with 120 male migrant workers. During my PhD fieldwork in Mumbai a member of staff associated with the project referred to this rapid assessment which, according to them, 'showed the seriousness and the depth of the problem'. In the words of the project manager of the Sathi Nepal, the rapid assessment revealed the high risk behaviour of Nepali migrants in Mumbai and that led to the design and implementation of the project. (Interview, 26 February 2005) A programme staff member provided me with compelling narratives about how the rapid assessment was instrumental in the birth of the Sathi Nepal project. The causal link between the findings and the recommendations of the rapid assessment and the birth of the project was explained. (Interview, 27 February 2005) The findings of the rapid assessment suggested that Nepali migrants were getting infected with HIV and possibly transmitting the virus back to their villages in Nepal and confirmed the need for interventions which targeted population groups and further defined the geographical focus. In my analysis, such a configuration could be read differently.

Apart from explaining the characteristics of these migrants as poor, both in Nepal and in India, working and living in poor conditions, the rapid assessment report stated:

> Many Nepali migrant workers reported going to sex workers in brothels. Interestingly, most of them went in groups to brothels for sex. The networks of friends and alcohol influenced the risk behaviour of individuals. Many Nepali men did not report their own risk behaviour; instead they reported their friends had gone to sex workers. A few reported having sex with non-paid non-regular partners in both Mumbai and Nepal. Nepali migrants preferred both Nepali and Indian women for sex. Some men considered bar based sex as "good" or better than brothel based sex, thus there was a possible shift in behaviour from brothel-based sex to non-brothel based, including beer bar sex, non-paid sex, and non-regular partner sex.
>
> Interestingly, more men were using condoms. However, consistent condom use with commercial sex workers did not seem to be a dominant behaviour. The consistent condom usage becomes very essential to protect from acquiring HIV, particularly when more than half of the sex workers in Mumbai were already infected with the HIV virus. On many occasions sex workers asked them to wear condom. Many mentioned not using condom when they were drunk.

> Further, Nepali men did not use condoms with their girlfriends and wives. Most people knew about HIV/AIDS. Many of them learned about it in Nepal (in schools, and through HIV/AIDS programmes). Although a lot of knowledge was correct, mosquitoes and razor misconceptions existed.
> Like many others in India, the trend was to go to private doctors for the treatment of general illnesses as well as STIs. However, some used the public system hospitals. Although some people knew about the testing centres, very few actually went on their own to get tested for HIV. Most of the Nepali migrant men, who went for testing, had gone there on the insistence of a doctor or while seeking care for other illnesses like malaria and typhoid.
> Surprisingly, a large number of migrant workers knew about other Nepali men and friends who were infected with HIV. They knew more dead people than currently living with HIV/AIDS. When people had a full-blown AIDS, they went home to die. Interestingly, not many migrant workers knew about Nepali organizations. These organizations were also perceived to be associated with one or the other political parties of Nepal (FHI, 2003: 60).

It can be read that the project components reflected the findings of the rapid assessment, including the dominant way international development organisations had been working in the field of HIV/AIDS prevention and care and support universally. I shall discuss the programme components a little later in this chapter.

According to the consultant involved in the assessment and FHI officials, the choice of the implementing agency was crucial; and it was not easy to select an organisation. The programme managers had the choice of Nepali migrant associations which had more networks with Nepalis in Mumbai, but were considered less experienced in carrying out programmes in the field of HIV/AIDS and their political affiliation to different political parties was found problematic. Thus the project was developed in the name of Sathi Nepal at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, which proved credible and suitable for its focus on social welfare education and programmes. (Interview, 2 March 2005) This particular choice clearly reflected the choice to treat migrants' life and livelihoods within the narrow frame of reference of pathology. The avoidance to involve the migrant association and political groups could be read as an effort to depoliticize the migrants (Ferguson, 1994, Harriss, 2002).

Maintaining the representation, producing success

While discussing the connection between the theoretical constructs of male labour migration and HIV/AIDS and how development and public health organisations actually implement these, following Mosse I find that the importance of institutions cannot be dismissed simply as implementing agencies of the policies (Mosse, 2005a). Rather the implementing agencies are important elements that work hard to maintain the legitimacy and the existence of the institutions themselves.

The working assumption of Sathi Nepal was that the migrants lacked awareness thus they had to be educated in HIV/AIDS and condom use among other things. There were four major programme components—behaviour change communication activities, psychosocial support, referrals for VCT and care and support and social mobilisation and advocacy. In behaviour change communication, Sathi Nepal carried out various activities through peer education, out reach education, IEC (information, education and communication) materials, satellite radio programmes, and different cultural and entertainment programmes. There was a weekly radio programme that was being broadcast both in Nepal and India through satellite radio and satellite radios had been distributed in the community. Under the psychosocial support component there were activities like referrals for VCT and care and support. Apart from a project coordinator, a visiting doctor and two counsellors in each of the field offices, there were 13 trained Out Reach Workers as paid staff of the project, and more than 20 Peer Educators in the communities. The counsellor and doctor gave counselling and medical check-ups related to sexual health issues and STI and, if they suspected someone of HIV, they referred them to a government hospital. It had established networking with government hospitals in Mumbai. The programmes were entertainment based and there were several games like 'Carom-board' and 'Ludo' in the field offices where the migrants could go and play. The project manager said that it was an alternative technique to attract the migrants to the field office. Various posters related to HIV/AIDS/STI, IEC were written in Nepali, and were on audio and video cassettes[102], TV/VCR were used for educating the migrants.

[102] The names of the two films that I saw were Asha and Sneha. Asha (hope) is a 49-minute long video-drama that gives the message that people with HIV should always remain positive and should

In the field office, I saw a flip chart written in Nepali which had been produced by UNAIDS.

The programmes of Sathi Nepal appeared to ignore that the Nepali migrant workers were political subjects. The effect of treating Nepali migrants as individuals with high risk sexual behaviour and individualized efforts to change their behaviour through programmes, explained above, again isolated the migrants from the social and cultural context in which they live. This was revealed by looking at the rapid assessment, the programme documents, educational materials and everyday activities of the project. Let us consider the brochure (see plate 7.2) that writes:

> Sathi Nepal, a programme run by Tata Institute of Sciences welcomes all the Nepali brothers in *prabās*.
> This programme has new *āyām* in the history of India. The main purpose of the programme is to establish a harmonious relationship among migrant Nepalis and provide health education through various entertainment programmes. For this programme field workers and doctor have been mobilized.

As we can see in the introduction of the brochure written in Nepali, that was intended to be distributed among the Nepali migrants, it did not introduce the programme as an HIV/AIDS prevention programme, aimed to reduce the risk behaviour of the migrants. The brochure used words like 'establishing harmonious relationship', 'provide health education', and 'various entertainment programmes' so as to gain the acceptance among the Nepali migrants. For instance the use of the words '*prabās*' (living abroad) and '*āyām*' (extension), which were neither commonly used nor understood by Nepali made it difficult for the majority of the migrants to understand the meaning. Following Justice, I argue that such a failure to address cultural sensitivity have serious consequences for the success of the project (Justice, 1989).

Another example worth mentioning was the celebration of *dasaĭ*. The project took festivals like *dasaĭ* as an opportunity to educate Nepali migrants on HIV/AIDS. The project appeared to reduce the cultural significance of *dasaĭ* into an opportunity to

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never give up hope. Sheha (love/affection) gives the message that people with HIV should not be discriminated but rather they should be given love, respect and affection.

educate Nepali migrants in Mumbai. Let us consider the following excerpt from my research assistant:

> 11:00 in the morning. It was the *dasaĭ* day. As I was talking to the coordinator of the field office, people began to trickle into the centre. The first to come is an elderly man (55 years wearing the traditional Nepali cap). The next to come in are a mother and 4 year old daughter. She sits with her mother and calls her *"aāma"*. I went and sat beside them on the mat. They are watching the television and I began to play with the girl. People were coming in slowly. They are sitting on the mats and watching TV playing Nepali songs. As the crowd increases, there are about 12 people in the room. The programme was scheduled for 10:30 but now it was already 11:30. All the men stood behind two women and their children and the prayer service started. A staff member of the centre performed the *ārati* to the background of loud *ārati* music on the record player. Everybody stood around with hands folded. After about 10 minutes each one went up and puts vermilion powder on the goddess and prayed. A coconut is broken and distributed. The group sat again and then the proceedings took place in Nepali and some parts in Marathi/Hindi. The people were asked to join in a game. The facilitator explained the rules of the game in Nepali. The people were asked to choose chits. One chit had Sathi Nepal written on it. The person who got that chit is asked to come up to the front of the group. More and more people trickle in small groups. It seemed that most of them know each other well. The person was asked a question written on a strip of paper and pinned on soft board. The options were given on other strips. The participants were to choose the option and if he has made the right choice he was given a prize else others were asked to try their luck. They seem to have enjoyed the game. Some of the questions asked were: What are the symptoms of HIV? Options like loss of appetite, prolonged fever, wet dreams, weight loss etc were given. Another question asked was the main causes of HIV infection and yet another one included the importance of use of condoms. The prizes included pens and in the answer for condom the prize given was the condom. The participants laughed as the condom was gifted. The game was played in the discussion mode. Every person who comes to the front told his name, his place of residence in Nepal and Mumbai. The number of people continued to rise and about to 20-25. The proceeding continues with snacks, music and dance.

No matter what complexities they confront in the field, the project managers lived in constant pressure from the authoritative discourses to meet the universal targets. The field workers and others working directly with the target population were left to make sure that they achieved the targets assigned to them. While it was important to understand different levels of pressure on the staff within a particular organisation, as I shall show, the project managers, counsellors, the doctors and out-reach workers,

all seemed to ensure that they achieved the targets given to them ensuring the legitimacy of the project (Mosse, 2005a).

The field offices, managed by a female counsellor, were open from 10am to 5:30pm for five days a week and functioned as a Drop in Centre (DIC) for the migrants. There was an assumption that the migrants would come to visit the DIC should they be in need of information on matters related to HIV/AIDS/STI. I did not observe any Nepali migrant visiting the DIC during my visits and asked the staff if migrants actually visited these DICs. I was told by a counsellor that 2-8 Nepali men visited the DIC daily looking for information related to sexual health and for entertainment. I suggest that the tension between the opening hours of the DIC (i.e. 10 to 5:30 when almost all the migrants go to work) and the claim made by the counsellor, could be understood as an attempt made by the counsellor to show the success of the programme. By showing the flip chart written in Nepali, the counsellor told me that she provided the migrants who visited the centre with pamphlets and encouraged them to ask any question related to sexual health. Indicating the video, flip charts, posters and pamphlets, she explained her job was to educate the visitors on HIV/AIDS and condom use. The counsellor told me that she did not have many problems in communicating with Nepali migrants as many of the Nepali migrants understood Hindi. When I asked if she had problems communicating with male migrants about sexual health issues, she told me that it was her job to give education on sexual health matters including HIV/AIDS/STI, thus did not find it awkward or difficult. She added, 'When I started the job, I was not very comfortable but now I am able to do this job. There is no problem'. (Interview, 9 March 2005) This explanation showed how the counsellor had familiarized herself with the discourses on HIV/AIDS and Nepali migrants. She told me that she liked to work with Nepali migrants, who were very friendly. According to her, HIV/AIDS was a major issue among Nepali migrants, so she was determined to work in this field.

A medical doctor, who visited the DIC three days a week from 3pm to 5pm, told me that his job was to provide health check-ups related to the migrants' sexual health issues. DIC was a single room, not very large in size (10 X 15), which had about 10

chairs and two tables and many IEC materials, including audio-visual tools. There was a cloth curtain (green as used in medical settings) which was used as a partition. I got an impression that the medical setting was necessary to engender a belief that HIV/AIDS/STI was a medical issue. I asked the medical doctor if he liked working on this project with Nepali migrants and if he had any problem communicating with Nepali migrants, he gave me a somewhat similar explanation to that of the counsellor. He said:

> I am anyway a medical doctor by profession, but working on this project gives me satisfaction as we know that Nepali migrants are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS as they don't know about HIV/AIDS and they do not know where to go when they get such disease. (Interview, 11 March 2005)

The statement by the doctor could be understood as a part of the authoritative discourse complicated by his need to maintain a socially polite attitude towards the Nepali migrants as demanded by the project. On the one hand he seemed to treat the Nepali migrants as victims and considered them uneducated and unaware, which gave him a purpose to his role, and he was compelled to justify his presence based on his medical profession and the project that employed him. I asked the medical doctor if he had checked Nepali migrants, who had visited him in the field office for STI or HIV or even AIDS, he told me:

> Oh! There are many such cases. Here, you need to remember that not everybody comes for a check up on their own. They feel shy and many of them do not know about the free service here. Our field workers (out reach educators) refer many cases, and they are the only people who come here. I am sure there are many cases. I might have seen more than 10 cases of STI here (DIC). (Interview, 11 March 2005)

To me, this was an interesting explanation presented by the doctor where he gave me a background of what he considered 'the problem' and then later provided me with the number of the migrants who had contacted STI. The doctor's attempt to convince me why there were about 10 cases of STI who visited the DIC could be read as his attempt to justify the legitimacy of his own job in the project.

In an attempt to understand the work of out-reach workers, I spent several days with out-reach workers. Let me discuss my interaction with an out-reach worker, who was a journalist associated with a local Nepali language newspaper in Mumbai. He told

me that he had been working with this project since the beginning and he had been enjoying the work. He added:

> This work is very important. I have been living in Mumbai for more than 6 years now, and I have seen many Nepali who have suffered from different sexually transmitted diseases, and a few of them have died at work, a few of them have been thrown out of their work because they were infected. I think this is going to be a major problem. (Interview, 5 March 2005)

On the day I accompanied him at his work, we went to meet two Nepali migrants and he talked with them casually. The out-reach worker spoke in Nepali to the men, who were taking a rest in their room, and asked them if everything was alright[103]. The migrants were lying down on the floor, and replied that everything was fine. We did not stay there long, as the migrants seemed very tired and were trying to sleep. Once we went outside, the out-reach worker told me that these two men visited sex workers regularly. When I asked him, how he knew this, he looked at me and said:

> You know about it by looking at their behaviour. I can guarantee that 60-70 per cent Nepali men go to sex workers. People may not like telling me this, but this is the truth. People feel shy to talk about it, but they don't know that their ignorance is killing them and many others not just here but also in Nepal. You see, they don't realize the seriousness of the problem. Some of my friends tease me for working with this, but now they have become aware of the problem. I am sure if we work like this in a bigger scale, then the problem will be in control. (Interview, 5 March 2005)

Towards the end of day, we sat in a tea stall where he took out his dairy and made notes. When I asked him what he was writing, he told me that he was writing the names of the people whom he had met that day, as they would be needed for his report. He told me:

> Every month I have a target of people to be reached out to and educate them on HIV/AIDS. So, I go to different localities where Nepali migrants live and work to educate them. Many of them I find during my work (Journalism work). It is not easy to talk to people on these issues. Initially people feel shy (he laughs) but slowly after making friendship (uses the English word here) people begin to talk to me, and listen to me carefully. While it (my work) might sound very easy to you, it is not that easy to reach the target and report to the office. (Interview, 5 March 2005)

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[103] *Sabai thik cha, haina ta?*

As we can see the out-reach worker lived under constant pressure to produce results in his monthly reports i.e. indicate the number of people out-reached monthly. In the process of his work the out-reach worker produced a form of representation of the migrants and their sexual behavior as was seen in the authoritative discourses of development agencies like Sathi Nepal.

Another big component of the programme was a satellite radio programme named *desh pardesh* in cooperation with a production company called 'Equal Access' based in Kathmandu. While I did not meet the staff at Equal Access face to face, I had an email conversation with them where they gave me information about the programme. Equal Access worked in close collaboration with the field staff of Sathi Nepal for the production of their radio programme. The reading of the programme documents forwarded by Equal Access to me stated:

> A major component of this initiative will be a cross-border radio programme, broadcast in Nepali language through satellite at both source and destination sites. Through this channel the programme will reach approximately 10,000 Nepali migrants in Mumbai and 10,000 Nepali migrants and spouses in source communities.

The radio programme aimed to reduce HIV transmission among Nepali migrants and their sexual partners by increasing awareness and knowledge on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) among both migrant communities in India and the 'home' communities back in Nepal. Therefore they used radio satellite broadcasting of entertainment education in both source and destination communities. The concept paper of the programme stated:

> Equal Access will design and produce high quality, linguistically and culturally appropriate, targeted radio programming with relevant prevention to care messages to Nepali migrants and their families in Nepal and Mumbai, India through satellite broadcasting.

I listened to the episodes broadcast on the radio. With the aim of educating the migrants through entertainment, non-drama components ('facts' on the number Nepali migrants in India, living and working conditions, HIV/AIDS, condoms etc) were combined with the ongoing story of a young Nepali man named Narendra, who experienced the difficulties and excitement encountered by Nepali migrants in India.

Beginning in March of 2005, Nepali communities in both Mumbai and western Nepal had been receiving the broadcasts via satellite radio, and many more hear them on FM rebroadcast and the state broadcaster, Radio Nepal. The very implementation of this programme, targeting Nepali migrants, had established a public knowledge that HIV/AIDS was a major issue among Nepali migrants in Mumbai. While the programme documents emphasized the participatory nature of the radio programme, the feedback process (letters to the radio programme) seemed to reflect the views that were transmitted through the radio waves.

All this showed the working context in which the development institutions did not just implement policies but also reproduced the discourse by working hard to maintain the legitimacy and the existence of the institutions themselves. The staff worked to maintain coherent representations of their actions as instances of authorised policy, because it was always in their interest to do so (Mosse, 2005a).

Migrants' response to the discourse

In the context of such pathologizing debate around the male migrants and their sexual behaviour, the male migrants responded to this and the programmes aimed to change their life, livelihoods and behaviour in different ways. It was not useful to contrast the formal development view with that of the migrants view, calling one or other real or unreal, rather I propose to treat both as discourses, the former being the dominant while the later being the subjugated one. Thus the migrants should not be treated as passive victims in the face of powerful dominant discourses of the development agencies rather they were active subjects who came to see themselves in the context of the authoritative views about their life. My fieldwork with the migrants showed that it was important to understand the significance of this view of the migrants of different types and see different ways in which they responded to these discourses. For instance some migrants, including the 'popular informants' like journalists, officials and activists associated with NGO workers, gave me an alarming picture of HIV/AIDS among the migrants, but this was not uniformly shared by most of the migrants I lived with. The migrants of different types provided

different accounts of their lives and it was not useful to treat migrants as uniform subjects.

What did the migrants think of Sathi Nepal?

During my fieldwork in Mumbai, I found that not all the migrants were aware of the presence of the Sathi Nepal project and its activities in Mumbai. Nonetheless, a significant number of migrants I met during my fieldwork had heard of the project and its activities either through out-reach educators, peer educators or through their friends. When I went to Mumbai with a group of migrants and lived with them in western sub-urban area, Goregaun, I initially found that Sathi Nepal was not familiar to most of the Nepali migrants in the neighbourhood though a field office of Sathi Nepal was located in the same area in Goregaun. Later, I discovered four migrants who knew about the project, as they had been approached by the project staff (out-reach workers) and/or they had come to know about it through their friends.

A Nepali migrant, aged 32 who worked as a Watchmen in Goregaun, told me, 'they (out-reach workers) come to meet us several times and invite us to visit their office, but I have not been there. It is of no use to me. I am not in such bad work[104].' When I asked further if he knew friends who were in bad work, he said no. (Interview 13 March 2005) Another young migrant, approximately aged 25 who worked as a cook in a Chinese restaurant in Goregaun, told me that he had been approached by what he called 'social workers' but he never liked to be approached by them. He said, 'they keep coming and telling us not to go to bad places and ask us to use that thing (condom).' (Interview, 3 March 2005) The case of these two migrants showed that they were aware of the project's attempt to reach out to them. To them there was a stigma attached to it. They did not use the word HIV/AIDS or sex but rather called it 'bad work' and avoided their association with it.

The other three migrants I met in Goregaun had been to the field office of Sathi Nepal in the same locality, which they thought was an office run for Nepali migrants

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[104] *naramro kam*

on 'AIDS'. One of them said that he went there with a friend to watch a movie and enjoyed it very much. He found it very entertaining and educational. (Interview, 2 February 2005) Another migrant I spoke to in Indira Nagar in Thane told me that the office educated Nepali migrants on HIV/AIDS and it gave free health checks for Nepalis. He thanked Sathi Nepal for taking such an initiative to control such an epidemic. (Interview, 5 March 2005)

While some of them told me that it was mainly targeted at Nepalis, a few others felt that it was targeted at everyone and not necessarily Nepalis. I had a group discussion with a group of Nepali and non-Nepali migrants in Indira Nagar, where a migrant from Uttar Pradesh asked why the project was only for Nepalis and not for others. In response everybody in the group laughed. The migrants whom I met in other parts of Mumbai, mainly in South Mumbai, felt that they were excluded from the Project, as the project was mainly focussed on Thane and on Goregaun. They had a question 'why is the project focussing only in those two areas and not in ours?' They felt excluded. These migrants saw the project as an opportunity for social mobility through health education, and possible financial or other opportunities that the project could bring to their lives.

My conversation with journalists and people associated with the Nepali migrant's association gave an impression that they understood the project as an opportunity. I engaged in conversation about Sathi Nepal with the editor of Indo-Nepal Samaj, who basically shared his dissatisfaction of the Sathi Nepal project, as he felt that the project was not targeting the entire Nepali population. He told me that he was never approached by the project manager while his newspaper had one of the biggest circulations in Mumbai and nearby cities. (Interview, 19 March 2005) Similarly, the editor of Nepal Front told me that he had heard of Sathi Nepal, and was interested to know more about the project. The Sathi Nepal project advertised in a few newspapers and he was interested to get advertising for his newspaper. People associated with the Nepali migrant's association were aware of the project, but they felt that they were excluded from the Sathi Project. An official with migrant's association told me that he had met the project manager and voiced his association's

opinion of the project. He asked me, 'don't you agree that we should have been consulted, and involved in the project? If they (Sathi Nepal) claim to work with Nepali migrants, then we are an organisation representing Nepalis in Mumbai.' (Interview, 8 March 2005) Some other migrants felt that the project had given employment opportunities to some while neglecting others.

Migrants' risk behaviour in Mumbai

As indicated earlier in this chapter, I did not pursue my fieldwork to assess the sexual behaviour of Nepali male migrants. Rather as described in Chapter VI, I was interested in the life and livelihoods of Nepali migrants, in particular the meaning, experience, network and identity. After travelling with a group of migrants from Palpa, I lived with the migrants in Goregaun in Mumbai only for a period of six weeks and I am aware that this time frame was relatively short for standard ethnographic fieldwork. However, my previous knowledge of Nepali migrants in Mumbai, my travel experience with a group of migrants, my fieldwork in Palpa, my decision to live with the migrants in their rooms and my native identity meant that I was able to collect a wide range of material within a short period of time. Given the presence of authoritative discourses on HIV/AIDS, I was curious to know how the migrants that I lived with responded to these discourses. Here I have tried to put together my interaction and encounter with HIV/AIDS related issues in the lives of the migrants.

Speaking to the migrants about sexual behaviour was not an easy task as it involved stigma and issues of morality. I was conscious of this perception and my previous training in social welfare helped me to be extremely careful in dealing with issues related to HIV/AIDS. I felt that my initial attempts to ask a few questions related to HIV/AIDS were not entertained by the migrants. But, I realized it was not like that with all the migrants. Some of the migrants I interacted with found it very easy to talk about HIV/AIDS in their life. An official associated with a local migrant association, who worked as an assistant to a general physician in the area, told his friends at their committee meeting that one needed to be 'frank' and 'open' about

these (HIV/AIDS) issues. I got an impression that the migrants were aware that they were linked to HIV/AIDS in the discourses of NGOs. They were conscious of these discourses and often tried to ignore conversation on issues related to HIV/AIDS with me. At the same time, a few migrants were interested in talking more about it and they encouraged others to talk about it. The migrants had heard of HIV/AIDS and considered it to be a fatal and infectious disease. While I did not get into discussion with the migrants about what exactly they understood by HIV/AIDS or STI, all of them told me that it was a disease to be avoided by not having sex without using a condom, and by not going to bad places[105] i.e. brothels for sex. They knew what condoms were and where to get them. They told me that a few Nepali migrants had died of AIDS. A middle aged migrant man in Thane put, 'Nowadays you hear about it everywhere. If you turn on the radio, it is there. If you read newspapers, it is there. If you go to a health post, it is there. It is not just here, but you will find it back in the village too. Only the day before yesterday, two men came and gave us this document (a leaflet).' (Interview, 14 March 2005)

While the popular informants (journalists, people associated with migrant association, social workers and people working with NGOs) gave me an alarming picture of HIV/AIDS among Nepali migrants, I did not get such an impression when I lived with migrants in Goregaun or in Thane in Mumbai.

I got three different types of responses from the migrants with respect to risk behaviour. First, some migrants told me that they did not have sex with sex workers, but they told me that they had heard rumours that some of their friends had visited sex workers and were infected with STI (they referred to the names *bhiringi*, syphilis and *luto*, scabies). In a casual conversation with two migrants in their late 20s, one of them said:

> So many Nepalis come here looking for work. We come here thinking that we will be able to earn some money and support our family back in Nepal. If you get into these things (sexual contact with sex workers), it is not possible for us to save money. While we hear that some of our friends have

[105] *narāmro thau*

been to such places (brothels), I don't think I will ever go there. (Interview, 10 March 2005)

It was interesting to see that this migrant used the families back home as an important justification for not participating in sex work. Another migrant in his early 40s told me, 'it is difficult to say, who goes and who does not. It is a matter of their choice, isn't it? That is their private matter. What can we say, we can only tell our friends, we can't tell everybody, can we?' (Interview, 3 March 2005) Another middle aged migrant (approximately aged 48) told me, 'We are away from home, and as you know we are human beings too. Sometimes going here and there is ok.' (Interview, 6 March 2005) When I asked them, where their friends went for sex, they told me that it was mainly to beer bars, Grant road, Turbhe store, Pawai and Mumbai Central. They told me that their friends spent a lot of money on sex workers, ranging from IRs 50 to IRs 1000.

Second, there were only two migrants who told me that they had been to sex workers a few times. They told me that they used condoms and did not get infected with STI or HIV. One of them told me with laughter, 'We went several times. Everybody said lets go, so we went. At first I came back after going inside the place as I didn't feel comfortable. I did not stay while others remained. I went to the same place later.' When I asked him if he used a condom, he opened his wallet and showed me two condoms with laughter, 'you can see this. I always carry this. What to do? You can't trust. I have to think of my family. People talk about scary diseases like AIDS and others.' (Interview, 6 March 2005) Another man in his early 30s told me that he preferred to go to beer bars and make sexual contact with the girls from there. He told me that sex with beer bar girls was safer than going to brothels. He said, 'I am a regular customer of the bar, and I like one girl in particular.' (Interview 3 March 2005) The interaction with these two migrants showed that while they went to brothels or to 'safer places' like beer bars for sex, they showed an awareness of the risk and the importance of condom use. However, not all the migrants I spoke to used condoms during sex.

Some of the migrants held a belief that the use of a condom did not give them enjoyment[106]. The absence of intimacy in their life in Mumbai meant that Nepali men sought intimacy through sex without using condom that blocked flesh contact. In some brothels, the sex workers asked them to use condoms. My interaction with the migrants showed that the migrants were aware of HIV/AIDS or sexual infectious diseases and the use of condoms, but this did not stop some of them from engaging in sexual practices. According to them it was a usual practice among their friends to go for sex both to recognized places (brothels) and less recognized places (their workplace, their own room or other public places like the park). Most of the migrants that I spoke to were aware of the recognized places in and around their workplace.

Third, other migrants that I spoke to told me that they did not visit sex workers and had not got infected with STI. They told me that they were not aware of any of their friends going to brothels for sex.

It is important to look at these responses from the migrants in the light of the dominant HIV/AIDS discourse that told the migrants that it was their choice to have sex or not to have sex, but it was important that they wear a condom and remove potential risks. In this context, it was not useful to consider these men as rational individuals who would respond positively to the health education given to them. It was unlikely that the HIV/AIDS programmes that did not consider the socio-cultural meanings would lead to success.

In order to understand the response of the migrants, it was useful to borrow the concept of 'cosmopolitan villagers' described by Pigg in her critical study of development in Nepal (Pigg, 1992: 507, Pigg, 1996: 173-174, 286, 293). Cosmopolitan villagers are those, who while they are themselves villagers in all purposes, nonetheless refer to other villagers as ignorant. Pigg's argument is that cosmopolitan villagers seek to distance themselves from others by stating their ability to recognize the characteristics of the generic villager, thereby aligning

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[106] *Maājā āudaina*

themselves on the side of development. This move is an important strategy in the politics of representation in a society where development is increasingly the source of power, wealth and upward social mobility. Cosmopolitan villagers figure that they can gain the advantage of development by becoming agents of development rather than the targets. This concept fitted very well with a set of migrants who considered themselves more knowledgeable on the issue of HIV/AIDS and aligned themselves on the side of the project and the discourse it promoted. It provided two important rewards. *First*, it had a symbolic importance for being more knowledgeable and being on the side of the developer. *Second,* a few of the migrants saw material benefits by being a part of it. For instance, the project hired a few peer communicators and outreach educators from the migrants and provided advertisement to the newspapers run by a few more affluent migrants.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that authoritative discourses on labour migration and HIV/AIDS, both in its conceptualization and implementation, pathologized the life and livelihoods of the migrants. Furthermore, the migrant population was represented as a virus like threat not just to the hill population of Nepal, but to the entire South Asian region and beyond. I have sought to demonstrate a possible way to understand the relationship between policies and practice, and the authoritative discourses that produced certain effects in the lives of the migrants. Towards the end of the chapter I highlighted the voices and experiences of Nepali migrants in Mumbai to explore the response of the migrants to such authoritative discourses that pathologized their livelihoods and sexuality.

I used the concept of pathology to critique the tendency found in the 'authoritative' discourses that represented men's migration as aberrant and also their sexuality, irrespective of how people themselves evaluated and categorized it. Such a discourse was well established among the policy makers and there was a strong tendency to view this as the reality for millions of people in Nepal and elsewhere. This reflected

the problem oriented political rationalities of the government or 'technics' (Inda, 2005: 9-10).

Governmentality provided a framework to illustrate how these authoritative discourses are reflected and acted upon in the actual development practice. It was by looking at 'concerns of the ethnography of development' (Mosse, 2005a: 6) that demonstrated how policies rule not through domination but through power that seemed to create a particular type of subjects. As I have shown above, it was through attention to the agency i.e. cosmopolitan migrants (Pigg, 1992, Pigg, 1996), staff and the analysis of institutions that mediated in this process that worked to produce 'success' (Mosse, 2005a: 19-20). The pathology of migration and migrants, as represented in development policies and their implementation in development practice, offered a useful perspective in contributing to this debate.

Plate 7.1 A Drop-in-Centre of Sathi Nepal, Mumbai

परप्रांतिय नेपालीयों के लिए

'साथी नेपाल' ने नेपालीयों के लिए लाया खुशी का बहार

नमस्ते,

सभी नेपाली भाईयों के लिए एक अनोखा प्रोजेक्ट टाटा सामाजिक विज्ञान संस्था के एच.एस. एस. विभाग अंतर्गत शुरू किया गया है। इस प्रोजेक्ट में हम सभी नेपाली भाईयों का स्वागत करते हुए उन्हें इस नए कार्यक्रम में भाग लेने के लिए आमंत्रित करते हैं।

हमारे नए प्रोजेक्ट में आकार आप कई अन्य नेपाली भाईयों से मिलिए और ज्यादा से ज्यादा मनोरंजन का लाभ पाईए। नेपाली कार्यक्रम, चित्रपट और अन्य खेल के अलावा स्वास्थ्य के बारे में जानकारी लिजिए। कुछ आरोग्य के बारे में अधिक जानकारी पाना चाहते हैं तो फिरफ वर्कर, काउन्सेलर, डॉक्टर की सहायता भी उपलब्ध है। जरूर आईए, जानकारी पाईए।

: सम्पर्क स्थान :-

'साथी' आफिस, सारमाई देवी रोड, शिवशक्ती नगर, तुर्भे स्टोर्स, तुर्भे, नवी मुंबई-४०० ७०५.
फोन : २७६१ ९९४५

साथी नेपाल

टाटा सामाजिक विज्ञान संस्थान
देवनार, मुंबई-८८

क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय

६६/५२८, गवर्नमेन्ट हाउसिंग, रोड नं. १३, आदर्श विद्यामार्ग, सिद्धार्थ नगर, गोरेगाँव (पश्चिम), मुंबई - ४०० १०४
फोन : ९८९९५३००३४, ९८९२०५५७२३, ९८२०३५५१४७, ९३२४३५३०८६, ९८९२१८५०३३

इन्दिरा नगर, रमाबेवी टेकाडी, पानी टेकीको मजिल, रोड नं १३, गावले स्टेट, ठाणे
फोन : ३५८१ ३०८३
९८१९७४९९६६
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fhi Family Health International Impact

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Plate 7.2 A brochure of Sathi Nepal targeted to Nepali migrants

Plate 7.3 Games being played on *dasaĭ* day in a Drop-in-Centre for Nepali Migrants, Mumbai

Plate 7.4 *Dasaĭ* day celebration among Nepali Migrants in a Drop-in-Centre, Mumbai

Chapter VIII

Re-imagining human mobility and international development

The series of ethnographies presented in the preceding chapters provide a range of empirical evidence on different aspects of human mobility in/from Nepal. This final chapter brings together the empirical evidence and arguments on human mobility to answer the research questions within the theoretical concepts outlined in Chapter I. In this way, my thesis develops several arguments on different aspects of mobility and in putting these arguments together contributes to the debate on the disjuncture between the authoritative discourses and ethnographic reality and politics in international development. I conclude this thesis by presenting an argument on the centrality of human mobility in people's lives.

Pathologies and politics

I introduced the concept of pathology to provide a critique of authoritative development discourses that conceptualize human mobility and mobile people (both populations and individuals) as aberrant, irrespective of how people themselves evaluated and categorized it. Such discourses appeared well established among the policy makers in the development sector and there was a strong tendency to view this as the reality for people in Nepal and elsewhere. It was not that there existed no material evidence to support the problems related to mobility, but this production took place within a particular institutional setting of authoritative development logic with its political effects (Ferguson, 1994, Inda, 2005).

Producing pathologies

I have argued that the social construction of mobility as a 'problem' is best understood within the conceptual framework of governmentality (Inda, 2005, Ferguson, 1994). Within this framework, I have discussed the case of rural

development and HIV/AIDS policies and programmes in Nepal, where mobility and mobile people are viewed as an abnormal feature of the hill society and economy.

Within the construction of the sedentary society, human mobility and mobile people were viewed, both explicitly and implicitly, as a problem. For instance, there was a strong tendency to view the success of a particular development project in terms of the reduction in the number of people who out-migrated. Likewise, the practice of labour migration to India was conceptualized as a problem for its potential to bring HIV/AIDS. While there was a shift within the development discourses of recent years, particularly in the post-1990 era characterized by neo-liberal policies and multi-party democracy, to take into account of remittances as an important element in development. Despite this, much development policy and practice appeared to implicitly view mobility as a problem and attempted to undermine it. The case of rural development policies and programmes in Nepal demonstrated that despite the change in policies under different aid regimes, the tendency to view mobility as a problem and attempts to control it through various policies and programmes was an important feature of development discourses. At the same time, there was a strong tendency within development discourses to view the village community as the unit of development.

More importantly, following the concept 'anatomato-politics of the human body or discipline', which means focussing analysis not on the population per se but on the individual bodies that compose it (Inda, 2005), I have presented an ethnography of development policies and programmes on male labour migration and HIV/AIDS targeting Nepali male labour migrants both in their place of origin in Nepal and recently in Mumbai. Here, the development discourses not only pathologized mobility in the abstract theoretical sense but specifically dealt with individual migrants who moved. These discourses conceptualized the individual migrants as a virus-like threat to the entire hill population of Nepal and beyond. The projects were thus organized around treating problems in these migrant individuals and their aberrant sexuality. An analysis of the project working with Nepali migrants in Mumbai showed that it operated by problematizing the sexual behaviour of the

Nepali migrants in general and targeting individual migrants to behave in a responsible ways. For instance, the programmes of the project asked Nepali male migrants to show responsibility towards others (family, community, nation and people as a whole) by practising safe sex. According to Inda, this particular way of governance through what he calls 'the ethos of responsibility', is a characteristic of the 'post-social or advanced liberal state', by which he means the neo-liberal state seen since the 1970s (Inda, 2006: 9, 29).

As I argued this construction of mobility and mobile people as a problem suggested that agriculture and environment management was not only central in people's livelihoods but should be the key element in any development strategy in rural Nepal. It led to a series of rural development projects, primarily within agricultural development, natural resource management and recently in the field of HIV/AIDS.

The construction of male labour migrants as a risk group led to a series of interventions in the field of HIV/AIDS both at the area of origin and destination. These programmes consisted of various awareness raising activities aimed at educating the migrants and their family members, distributing condoms, broadcasting radio and television programmes, distributing IEC (information, education and communication) materials, mobilising peer educators and outreach workers and various other behaviour change programmes. Through various programmes designed within the narrow biomedical framework of public health, the migrants were asked to be responsible by using condoms and practising safer sex (Inda, 2006). As I showed, such interventions systematically ignored the socio-cultural and politico-economic meanings of male labour migration (Ferguson, 1994, Inda, 2006).

However, this was not surprising when the production of knowledge was guided by an interest in intervention. Representation of Nepal as an agrarian and natural resources dependent society made it possible for the development institutions to intervene with a series of agricultural improvements and natural resource management programmes in Nepal. This would have been different if the discourses represented the centrality of mobility in livelihoods. Representation of Nepal as a

nation where human mobility is an important aspect of people's livelihoods would have left less room for interventions to these development agencies under the current 'authoritative' discourses. The implicit logic of such representations was to discourage mobility and discuss its role as negative or at best irrelevant. Furthermore, the development interventions found it quite difficult to govern a population that refused to stay in one place. This negative association shaped the policy discourses which turned attention away from mobility as a fact of contemporary rural livelihoods and viewed it instead as an exception. Human mobility from one place to another place was viewed as a problem, a problem that invited development and NGO interventions of different types (Inda, 2006).

Such development discourses ignored the existing contributions of mobility to livelihoods, and their programmes were weakened because they did not take mobility of various kinds into account. Furthermore, development projects concerned with rural development, agriculture, natural resources, watershed management, HIV/AIDS and so on tended to construct rural livelihoods in terms of their own interventions. While there was no disagreement that agriculture played an important role in people's livelihoods, but failing to comprehend mobile and multifaceted aspect of people's livelihoods may have had serious and detrimental implications for rural development programmes.

In this respect, it is possible to find a parallel with Ferguson's critique of rural development in Lesotho, where he provided a discursive analysis of the World Bank's country report that constructed Lesotho as an agrarian society by simultaneously undermining the presence and importance of labour migration. 'The homogenizing results of such representations can be almost comical—many reports on Lesotho look as though they would work nearly as well with the word "Nepal" systematically substituted for "Lesotho"' (Ferguson, 1994: 70). However, Ferguson himself argues that different constructions may be needed to use such a discourse in different contexts. My reading of discourses of rural development in Nepal shared much in common with Ferguson's reading of Lesotho. However, unlike Ferguson, I have argued that it is not useful to make a distinction between academic and

development discourse in the Nepali context (Ferguson, 1994: ix), particularly because social science in Nepal has largely been established within the frame of reference of development policies (Onta, 2006, Mishra, 1984).

The governmental analysis helped to show how development interventions had a particular effect in managing population both in collective and individual forms, so as to exercise authority over it. Categorising mobility as a problem was a key to this politics.

On policy and practice

The implementation of authoritative ideas of pathologies of mobility in the actual practice of development in the field of migration and HIV/AIDS offered a way forward to look at the relationship between policy and implementation (Mosse, 2005a). The study of the 'Sathi Nepal' project as it was implemented in Mumbai showed that the relationship between policy and practice was not a straightforward process, but rather a complicated one with intervening interests and institutions. Nonetheless, the policy informed by the authoritative discourses on the pathology of mobility was very important to organize the resources, support and maintain a particular representation of the project (Mosse, 2005a).

The development institutions implementing projects and programmes on HIV/AIDS and migration at the national or community level reflected global discourses on the issue through their hierarchical relationship with the development institutions operating universally. I examined the shifts in development discourses on the behaviour of implementing agencies that were transmitted to them via a range of mechanisms—consultants, reports and conditions of funding. I argued that the authoritative discourses pathologized the life and livelihoods of the Nepali male labour migrants through various instruments—programme documents, rapid assessment, programme activities and report writing—primarily to govern the individual migrants through various interventions. I showed that the development projects drew inspiration not necessarily from the ground reality, while presenting it as an important justification for the project, but maintained the representation of the

dominant universal models and language of migration and HIV/AIDS through the institutions that implemented these programmes (Mosse, 2005a).

Form the perspective of the policy makers and programme managers, the popular tool called rapid assessment was critical to contextualize the discourse and thus win legitimacy over the production of social knowledge of the life, livelihoods and sexual behaviour of the migrants. The rapid assessment served the purpose of the implementing agency as it legitimized the interventions by providing justification at the local level, and to an extent addressed the concern of policy scientists who were interested in cultural appropriateness or managerial issues of the project. The explicit and implicit agreement between the development agency and the consultants and staff who engaged in this process of production of rapid knowledge led to a social production of knowledge on the migrants in the local context.

Despite the use of rapid assessments, the programmes were not seen as culturally appropriate in their implementation (Justice, 1989). This was reflected in the overwhelming number of staff who neither spoke Nepali nor had any previous experience of working with Nepali migrants. Likewise, as seen in the ethnographic description of the celebration of the festival of *dasaĭ* in the field office of the project, the festival was used as an opportunity to educate the migrants by ignoring the cultural significance of the festival. The programmes did not appear to acknowledge or respect the economic (remittances) or cultural significance (masculinity) of migration to the migrants and their households back home, but rather appeared to treat migrants within the biomedical framework of diseased individuals.

Here I must make it clear that I am not just offering a critique of development and public health institutions for their ignorance about 'real' situations, rather I am arguing that such ignorance is systematic and reflects the logic of representation that prevails in development institutions (Ferguson, 1994). My argument is that the pathologization created a space for the development and public health institutions to situate themselves as legitimate change agents.

As discussed, the project managers lived in constant pressure from 'authoritative' discourses to meet the universal targets. At the same time the field workers and others working directly with the target population were left to make sure that they achieved the targets assigned to them, no matter what complexities they confronted in the field. I argued that the project managers, counsellors, doctors and outreach workers seemed to ensure that they achieved the targets given to them and ensured the legitimacy of the project (Mosse, 2005a).

These findings showed that the relationship between policy and practice was complex. Policies appeared important in mobilising the political support, resources and establishing the legitimacy for the project (Mosse, 2005a: 14-16). The use of instruments like rapid assessments seemed critical in the implementation of the project that legitimized the project for its cultural appropriateness while maintaining discourses of pathology. It appeared that the value of socio-cultural knowledge was undermined in the implementation of the projects; rather, maintaining the policy appeared to be the priority. The question then was not just the lack of socio-cultural understanding but its use and value.

Migrants' response

An important question is—in the context of such authoritative discourses around the migrants and their sexual behaviour, how might we understand the response of the Nepali migrant workers? The Nepali migrants did not view the 'Sathi Nepal' project and the discourses it imposed in a consistent way. The migrants' response showed that it was not useful to treat the migrants as useless passive victims in the face of powerful authoritative discourses. Rather it was important to understand the significance of the discourses for the migrants and see different ways in which they responded to these. It was possible to identify at least three different responses from the migrants. *First*, some responses showed that they were conscious of the attempt made by the project to reach out to them and felt stigmatized; thus they tried to avoid the project. *Second*, there were responses from migrants who felt that the project was important to reduce the risk of HIV among Nepalis. Another group of responses

viewed the project as an opportunity to associate migrants on the side of development and sought socio-economic mobility.

The discourses on HIV/AIDS conceptualized the migrants as a diseased and an ignorant population to be educated. In order to understand the response of the migrants, I borrowed the concept of 'cosmopolitan villagers' described by Pigg in her critical study of development in Nepal (Pigg, 1992: 507, Pigg, 1996: 173-174, 286, 293). This concept fitted very well with the outlook of those migrants who considered themselves more knowledgeable on the issue of HIV/AIDS and aligned themselves on the side of the project and the discourse it promoted. It provided two important rewards. It had a symbolic importance for being seen as more knowledgeable and being on the side of the developer. Likewise, a few of the migrants saw material benefits by being a part of the project. For instance, the project hired a number of peer communicators and outreach educators from amongst the migrants, and took advertisements in newspapers run by a few more affluent migrants. This showed that the migrants appropriated themselves as actors in this process of social production of their own. The presence of both the common and contrasting understanding between the authoritative discourses and the perspective of the migrants showed that there were processes of subjugation and the choices made by the migrants.

Politicization and de-politicization

There was a strong tendency in development discourses to depoliticize the subject (Ferguson, 1994, Harriss, 2002). This was demonstrated in three different ways. *First*, as I discussed earlier, mobility was conceptualized as a technical problem to be solved with different rural development programmes, particularly within the agriculture and the natural resources sector. Likewise, the issue of HIV/AIDS among the Nepali migrants was treated as a technical health problem to be solved with a range of behaviour change programmes. *Second*, mobile people were ignored as political subjects but rather they were treated as technical subjects to be dealt with by development programmes of different types. For instance, by choosing to ignore the migration between Nepal to India and the Nepali migrants as a political process

and political subjects respectively, development and public health discourses isolated the migrants from the historical and political economic context in which they were located (Ferguson, 1994, Inda, 2006). The effect of treating Nepali migrants as individuals with high risk behaviour and the various individualized efforts to change their behaviour again isolated the migrants from their social and cultural context. The significance of mobility in the life of the migrants in terms of their conception of manhood and the importance of their remittances to the households was silenced to produce migrants as vulnerable, irrational, stupid, sexually promiscuous and immoral individuals (Inda, 2006). This was best exemplified in the HIV/AIDS project working with Nepali migrants in Mumbai where the project avoided the inclusion of migrant associations in the implementation of the programme. *Third*, the development programmes attempted politics by pathologizing human mobility side by side promoting a series of rural development programmes, which was represented as a technical instrument. I showed that mobility had become a central site for the development and public health interventions which appeared to translate the political problems of labour migration and threat of HIV/AIDS into a developmental programme, thereby attempting technical solutions to political problems. Thus it can be argued that development policy was a politics that claimed legitimacy by presenting itself as a scientific and technical tool (Ferguson, 1994). The political characteristics of policy were justified by presenting it as a form of neutral knowledge and failing to reflect on its own assumptions. My purpose was to examine development programmes as a socio-political process and challenge their 'depoliticized', 'dehumanized', 'isolating' and 'silencing' vision. Development agencies did not just attempt to implement the universalising discourses on mobility but also reproduced similar forms of representation, which were essential for their own existence and survival (Mosse, 2005a). This politics of existence and survival was best understood in the larger context of the political economy of development interventions in Nepal and elsewhere.

Multifaceted picture of human mobility

One of the major objectives of this thesis was to explore different forms of mobility in/from Nepal as constructed and categorized by the people themselves, and to

analyse their implications for contesting the existing official categories, typologies and representations of human mobility. The framework of social construction was used to explore and examine the grounded perspective on different forms of mobility and its implication for how people constructed the meanings of human mobility in relation to their life and livelihoods (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). With the use of ethnography as a method of understanding the meanings of different forms of mobility as experienced and categorized by the people themselves, it was possible challenge the existing categories and conceptions.

Power of ethnography

The use of ethnography as a method played a critical role in finding out the different forms of mobility as understood and categorized by the people themselves. Ethnographic fieldwork was important because it is not far removed from the sort of approach that we use in everyday life to make sense of our surroundings. By 'being there' it was possible for me to use the local language, observe, interact and listen to how people experienced and explained different forms of mobility. Studying the meanings of mobility as experienced, evaluated and categorized by the people themselves required some level of openness to listen to them. I started learning and using the local terms that people used to talk about different forms of mobility in their everyday life, which resulted in a long list of different forms of mobility beyond the official categories that I was initially familiar with. The generation of the list of grounded understandings of 15 different forms of human mobility would not have been possible by using other methods of data collection. No other method would have been helpful to find out the different forms of mobility as evaluated by the people themselves. For instance, a direct questioning approach would have categorized the grounded understanding within the existing typologies and categories of human mobility. Ethnography remained a significant method for its specific focus in championing local meanings. This meant that it was not just possible to talk about the meanings and explanation of different forms of mobility but also to explore how categories were formed in relation to people's livelihoods. The focus on the details through participant observation and semantic analysis in the local context meant that

it was critical to understand the social and cultural meanings of mobility in the specific setting.

Centrality of mobility

The list of 15 different forms of human mobility as perceived and evaluated by the people themselves showed that it appeared more of a rule than an exception in the hills of Nepal. Furthermore, mobility as categorized and evaluated by the people helped to find out the meanings that people attached to these experiences, aspirations, constraints and possibilities. While the meanings, experiences and dynamics of mobility differed across class, gender, ethnicity and age, as well as the destination, duration and purpose, the ethnography showed that people moved and it remained an important feature of their livelihoods.

Given the tendency in the scholarship in migration studies to treat different forms of human mobility separately, I have argued that they have to be considered together. In order to do that I suggested inclusion of all forms of mobility beyond what had been considered to be the significant temporal or spatial or motivational dimensions in the official typologies and categories of migration. This had the particular advantage of seeing human mobility as an analytical problem as well as challenging the existing typologies, categories and representations. Here, I was not saying that these forms of human mobility were identical. Rather I was saying that it was important to consider the ways in which these forms of mobility were similar as well as the ways in which they differed. What appeared to bring different forms of mobility together was their concern with socio-cultural meaning and experience. All forms of mobility appeared to contain some form of socio-cultural meaning whether it was children running away, pilgrimage or travel to the Gulf for work. At the same time each of the forms of mobility had particular meaning and significance for the people. Treating together different forms of mobility, which were often treated under different theoretical frameworks, categories and disciplinary fields, made it possible for a new understanding of the meaning and experience of mobility as an analytical problem.

The multifaceted picture of mobility presented in this thesis challenged the authoritative development discourses on immobility and sedentary livelihoods in the hills of Nepal. Consideration of the 15 different forms of human mobility that I was able to capture during my fieldwork showed that people in the hills were frequently on the move. This evidence destabilized the bounded conception of village society prevalent in much of development discourses. Considering the significance of mobility across age, gender, class and ethnicity, mobility in the hills was not an exception but a usual feature. Here, the prevalence of mobility was not to be understood as a result of modernisation and globalisation. While a changing political economy and new technologies shaped the dynamics of mobility, the historical and ethnographic evidence had shown that it was a consistent feature of people's livelihoods. This implied that mobility, which had been missing and/or pathologized, needed to be brought back into the centre of social analyses, opening new possibilities for the understanding of social life.

A socio-cultural account of human mobility

The ubiquitous presence of different forms of mobility meant that a useful way of understanding this aspect of society was to explore the meanings people attached to it and considered the contexts that constrained or facilitated it. The livelihoods perspective provided a useful framework to explore the meanings that people attached to mobility within the given context (Bebbington, 1999, Whitehead, 2002).

The meanings of different forms of mobility as evaluated and categorized by the people showed that it was best understood as a socio-cultural process. This is not to say that the economic dimension of human mobility was not important at all. Rather my argument is that the socio-cultural dimension seemed more important from the people's perspective. Whether it was local meanings, decision making, experience or the impact of different forms of human mobility, it was best explained within the socio-cultural framework. This framework provided a strong justification for considering mobility as an analytical problem. For instance, the exploration of local meanings of some forms of human mobility like 'labour migration' or 'hill-*terāi* migration' that were understood in the existing scholarship mainly within the

economic and structural framework showed that perhaps scholars working in this field have neglected the socio-cultural dimensions of these movements.

Livelihoods strategy

The case of Nepali men who travelled to work in India showed that this form of mobility was a regular part of people's livelihoods in the hills of Nepal and not an exception to it. The livelihoods perspective, through its focus on human agency and the socio-cultural dimension, was a useful theoretical concept to explain the meanings, decision making, experiences and impact of Nepali men's movement to work in Indian cities like Mumbai (Thieme, 2006, Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1995, De Haan and Rogaly, 2002). While Nepal's dependence on India provided a useful context (Blaikie et al., 1980, Breman, 1985), the ethnography showed that this framework of dependency alone appeared insufficient to explain the meanings, decision making, experience and impact of this movement on the lives of these men and their households. At the same time, it was less relevant to consider these men who went to work in India as rational economic minded individuals (Regmi and Tisdell, 2002, Todaro, 1976, Lee, 1966, Stark, 1991, Stark, 1980), particularly because only a few of them were able to earn money to transform their life.

I have suggested that while the livelihoods framework was useful to understand this movement for its focus on human agency and socio-cultural dimensions, it needs to broaden its scope to bring the socio-cultural dimensions into the centre. While scholars working within the livelihoods framework have given importance to socio-cultural variables (De Haan and Rogaly, 2002, De Haan, 1999, Thieme, 2006, Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1995), often they are considered to be a less significant, where economic considerations are given primary focus. In this context I have suggested that it was possible to view Nepali men's movement to the Indian city in relation to masculinity. Here, masculinity did not appear a marginal, but rather a major ideological space (MacInnes, 1998) that explained the local meaning, reason, decision making, experience and impact of the movement. Within the context of dependency, these men were active in exercising their agency in search of manhood. The livelihoods perspective was useful particularly because this made it possible to view the migrant

men as exercising their agency in search of manhood within the dependency relations between Nepal and India.

Ideas of Manhood

Various estimates have shown that out of one million Nepali migrants in India, about 90-95 per cent of them are men (Thieme, 2006). While females have featured as gendered subjects in the discussion relating to the trafficking of girls (Joshi, 2001), and in the life of wives of migrants left behind (Shrestha and Conway, 2001) the overwhelming majority of men have so far been treated as gender neutral subjects. Thus, the concept of masculinity provided a useful framework to understand the meaning and experience of Nepali men who travelled to Indian cities like Mumbai in search of work opportunities.

The regular scene of men travelling to work in Indian cities like Mumbai had a powerful effect on the ways manhood was defined in the local context (Osella and Osella, 2000). Men's movement to India in search of work opportunities was called *phāltu kām*, which was not a respectful category for the village men when compared with other forms of movement related to work (e.g.: *jāgir, lāhur, bidesh tira jāne* etc). However, it was a preferable thing for the village men than working in the fields in the village, commonly known as *halo jotne*. Despite being understood locally as *phāltu*, the experience of movement to work in Indian cities provided opportunities for recreating their masculine identity. However, it was important not to fall into the pragmatic approach in analysing men's experience of movement in relation to masculinity. Depending on the context, movement created, constrained or reconstituted masculinity. Depending on the experience, a few developed a more hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995) through their experience of work in India, while others found their masculinity threatned (Charsley, 2005). It was only by taking the entire context of such movement into account i.e. local meanings, journey, working and living conditions in the destination, that it was possible to examine how movement was related to masculinity.

Towards understanding the disjuncture and politics in international development

In this section I bring the range of evidence and arguments together to make a case for understanding the disjuncture between the authoritative discourses and the complex ethnographic reality and politics in international development. By highlighting the disjuncture in international development, my thesis contributes to the debate on the politics of international development.

Disjuncture

The presence of a disjuncture between the authoritative discourses and the complex ethnographic reality was what appeared to characterize international development. Despite the historical and ethnographic evidence that mobility had been a usual practice, development discourses continued to conceptualize rural hill society as closed, with very little mobility. Furthermore, despite the significance of mobility for people's livelihoods, there was a strong tendency, both explicit and implicit, to pathologize mobility in the authoritative discourses on international development. The development programmes that were intended to help people manage their livelihoods appeared to undermine it by controlling mobility. There was an economic bias within the development institutions' view on mobility, despite the strong socio-cultural meaning that people attached to different forms of mobility. For instance, the policies reflected the view that people migrated in search of work either as reactors to economic dependency (i.e. reflective of the neo-Marxist view) or as rational economic minded individuals (i.e. reflective of the modernisation or neo-liberal view). Whereas the evidence showed that economic dependency provided a context for some forms of mobility, it did not explain how people made decisions. People appeared to make decisions based on the household situation and by taking a socio-cultural perspective. For instance, the ethnography showed that it was the socio-cultural dimension explained by masculinity that appeared to offer insight into the meaning and experience of men who travelled to work in India. The development discourses viewed HIV/AIDS as a major problem among the male migrants in Mumbai, whereas in contrast, masculinity and remittances appeared far more important issues to the migrants.

Politics

The disjunctures highlighted above raise an important question about their implications and politics. Building on these disjunctures, it is possible to make a few remarks about international development.

First, development cannot be understood as a technical programme but rather we need to see development as a socio-political process (Ferguson, 1994, Harriss, 2002). There appeared a fundamental problem with the authoritative discourses of development where they pathologized mobility despite the ubiquitous presence of mobility of different types in people's livelihoods. Thus, development needs to be viewed as an authority that problematizes human mobility, besides representing that it can be solved with a series of development programmes. Sustaining a particular representation to maintain its authoritative presence appeared to be the politics of international development.

Second, there had been a major shift in the way mobility is handled. For instance, historical evidence showed that before agreement was reached between the Rana rulers and British authorities in India about the recruitment of hill men into the British Army inside Nepal's border, this practice of mobility was prohibited by the previous rulers. The property of those who did not abide by the rule was confiscated and the men who went for recruitment were criminalized. With the start of international development in Nepal in the 1950s, there had been an implicit attempt to control mobility by the introduction of a series of rural development programmes, particularly within the agriculture and the natural resource sector. The reduction in the number of people out-migrating from a particular area was an indicator of success. The attempt of these programmes had been to represent a view that people lived and must live in one place.

During the 1960s and 70s, following the malaria eradication programme with the support of USAID, the state carried out a series of resettlement schemes from the hills to the *terāi* that were aimed to address the shortage of food in the hills. The

programme appeared to have intended to resettle the hill population in the *terāi* to retain the purity of the Nepali nation against the threat of Indian immigrants. The attempt of planned resettlement was a failure in the sense that an overwhelming number of households shifted to the *terāi*, giving a rise in the number of squatter settlements.

In another arena, until the mid 1990s, the government of Nepal had a centralized system of issuing of passports, which required that those who wanted to travel to a third country (i.e. apart from India) needed to go to Kathmandu to apply for their passport and go through a complicated official processes. In 1985, the government introduced the Labour Act to facilitated migration for work to about a dozen foreign countries. Since the 1990s, the processes for applying for passport had been decentralized, making it possible for the people to apply for passports in their own districts. Similarly, the public debate on the remittance economy of Nepal had been getting louder since the mid 1990s. With the beginning of the new century, a few international donors including the World Bank, the DFID and ADB were seen discussing policies to include remittances into development.

At the same time, there was a growth of private sector manpower agencies and individual agents brokering to send migrant workers and students abroad. Along with that there was a growth in NGOs and activism on issues relating to trafficking, maltreatment of migrant labourers, etc. Recently in 2006, Nepal became a member of the International Organisation of Migration (IOM). All these developments showed that the shift in governance was more towards the management of mobility than explicitly controlling it.

Third, development agencies used a variety of ways to make the global discourses compelling at the level of implementation by the use of various instruments like rapid assessments. Despite this, it was not always possible for international development to be able to impose its authoritative discourses on the people. The authoritative discourses played an important role not just in mobilizing resources but also in building a suitable ideological context that the subjects themselves found

compelling. The 'cosmopolitan migrants' who aligned themselves on the side of development appeared significant in this process (Pigg, 1992, Pigg, 1996).

Fourth, development agencies appeared to systematically ignore socio-cultural knowledge, particularly because their major concern was with maintaining policy representation and not socio-cultural knowledge. Thus, the question was not just the availability of socio-cultural knowledge, rather its priority and use.

Fifth, implementing policy ideas was not a straightforward process particularly because of intervening institutions and multiple interests that mediated in this process. Nonetheless authoritative discourses were important for mobilisation of resources and reproducing a particular conception of the issue. Thus the success of a development programme did not appear to depend on how successfully a policy was implemented but rather on how well the implementation produced success by maintaining a particular representation of the policy.

The contrast between the complicated reality of mobility and the attempts made by international development to control and manage it was paradoxical. While we have no evidence that international development has been able to reduce human mobility, its endless efforts in the sedentary representation of Nepali society to control mobility through various rural development programmes, and attempts to pathologize people who move, showed paradox and politics in it. Following Spencer on the modern state's attempt to control human mobility and the rise of violent conflict in Sri Lanka, it is possible to see the emergence of the Maoist conflict in Nepal by the same logic (Spencer, 2004). What was particularly revealing was that the areas where the Maoist movement began and proliferated were the same areas where high rates of human mobility were observed; and that much of the focus of development programmes was in similar areas, including the first rural development programme in Nepal in the Rapti valley of the western hills. This area of inquiry needs further historical and ethnographic investigation.

Towards a mobile society

This ethnography has demonstrated the ubiquitous presence and importance of mobility in the life and livelihoods of the people in Palpa. Furthermore, I discussed the socio-cultural meanings of different forms of mobility that differed from the official categories and typologies. Thus, it appeared impossible to talk about livelihoods in the hills of Nepal without considering the significance of mobility. If mobility was a usual feature and not an exception, then social scientists need to rethink the 'field' and 'population' they work with, leaving possibilities for understanding a mobile and multifaceted picture of social life. The task then is to find the missing aspect of mobility, bring the socio-cultural, economic as well as political dimension to its understanding and highlight this politics of missing of mobility in scholarly work and development policies. Furthermore, the significance of mobility in livelihoods, gender identity, social networks, remittances and various socio-political mobilizations within and outside of Nepal at the time of socio-political transformations, offer an opportunity to explore the shifting nature of Nepali state.

I end this thesis with a scene of young men moving away from home, which was a usual part of social life in the village where I carried out my fieldwork:

> It was about 11 am, in mid October, Pitambar, a Bahun man of 34 with two of his nephews (about 18 -20 years old) were about to leave for Delhi. Pitambar was returning to work in Delhi after *dasaĭ* holidays. At this time he was taking two of his nephews for the first time to Delhi. He had already found a job for one as a domestic worker in Friends Colony and, given the demand for domestic workers in Delhi, he was hopeful that he would be able to find work for the other one soon. It was an emotional scene. The two boys in their new clothes were staring at their family members and seemed both nervous and shy. At the same time, some of the members of the family and friends were teasing the two nephews for going to be *lāhures*. The departure scene took about 15-20 minutes where about 10-15 family members and neighbours had gathered in front of the house. Signifying good luck for travel, those who were leaving had red *tikā*[107] on their forehead and carried fruit (guava). They were not carrying anything other than two small bags. Much focus on the departure was on the boys, who were leaving home for the first time. They were asked to take care of

[107] Mark placed on the forehead as part of religious worship.

themselves and not become involved in *narāmro kām* (immoral work/behaviour) and send *hālkhabar* (news) regularly. Pitambar assured his brothers and sister in laws that he would take care of their boys and they need not worry about them. As they left, all the family members gathered and watched them walking away until they disappeared along the trail that led to the main road. In response, the three men turned back frequently and waved. One of the mothers had tears in her eyes, but the grandmother said in an authoritative voice to stop crying at the time of *sāit* (ritually favourable time of travel). When the three men were out of sight, the people returned to their usual routine.

Glossary

ansha : part, share of inheritance.

aul : malarial fever; low-lying land.

bajār jane : to go to a town market to buy/sell; for treatment or for work

bāri : dry field; it is used for growing maize, millet among others.

basāi sarne : movement of household from one place to another for settlement; to shift settlement.

beshi : the lower part of the hill sides and valley floors, which is considered fertile and malarial

bhāgne : running away from home as early as 12 without consulting parents; escape for a short period or longer

bhāri bhokne : to carry weight

bidesh : foreign

bidesh tira jāne: single men go to foreign countries to find jobs, legal/illegal, personal network/formal agencies.

bihe garera jāne/āune:movement of women as a result of marriage

chakkā jām : a very common method of strike by stopping vehicular movement

dasaĭ : the festival held on the tenth day of the light fortnight of the month Asvin (September/October) in honour of goddess Durgā.

gallā : recruiter; who went to different villages in the hills for recruiting men in foreign army

gasti : search operation; patrol done by security forces.

gāũ : village; houses in the village that are located in the higher altitude of the hill

ghar/gāũ chodeko: to leave the village/ home due to compulsion.

ghareri : a piece of land just enough for building small house (and sometimes a small vegetable garden)

halo jotne : to plough in the field

India tira jāne : single men work in India

jāgir khāne : work for government/ other agency, with some job security and regular salary/pay.

janaï : sacred thread; it is mainly worn by Bahuns and Chetris. It has a symbolic importance for asserting ritual purity among Bahuns and Chetris.

jyalādari kām garna jane: movement to work as daily wage worker

kām garna rākheko: sending children to cities for domestic help

keti bechne : selling women and girls; trafficking of women and children

khet : irrigated field; it is used for paddy cultivation

kul poojā : a very important festival among both Bahuns and Magars, which means 'worshipping household deity'. All or at least one member of the clan gather together, usually in their place of origin, to worship their household deity and celebrate.

lāhur jāne : single men joining foreign armies. Those who work in such armies are known as *lāhure*.

momo : dumpling; it was an important snacks among Kathmanduties, mostly among the young and working people

mukti : salvation; also known as punyā.

nākābandi : a common practice of strike by imposing blockades.

Nepal band : a practice of strike by shutting down of the whole country (Tamang et al.).

padhna jāne : to move for education that enabled to find better jobs.

pahādi : people of hill origin

pākho : rocky land; it is not suitable for farming. It is used for growing fodder and used as a grazing land.

pañchāyats : village level administrative divisions that are today called Village Development Committee (VDC).

phāltu : useless

pirhi : veranda

ropani : unit for land measurement: 1 ropani is 70 ft by 70 ft, approx 455 square metres.

terāi	:	the low-lying land at the foot of the Himalayas.
tīrtha jāne	:	pilgrimage (within or out side of Nepal)
sangai jāne	:	accompanying the mover.

ANNEX I

NEPAL

Key Political Events (since 1990)

1989/1990	Pro-democracy movement jointly by Nepali Congress and leftist groups. Initial attempt to suppress but king Birendra eventually agrees to constitutional monarchy and a new constitution.
1990	Multiparty democracy was restored, and a new constitution was written later in November 1990.
1990-95	Three of the four parties form CPN-Unity Centre. Reject 1990 constitution, refine ideological position, and purge dissenting members.
1991	Nepali Congress (NC) wins the first democratic elections. Girija Prasad Koirala becomes the prime minister.
1994	Intra-party conflict within NC leads to no-confidence motion. New elections lead to formation of Communist government.
1995	Communist government dissolved. Radical leftist group, the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) begins insurrection in rural areas aimed at abolishing monarchy and establishing People's Republic.
1996	CPN-Maoists begin people's war. Government perceives it as a law and order problem. Ill equipped police respond to the rebels.
1997	Continuing political instability as Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is defeated and replaced by Lokendra Bahadur Chand. Chand is then forced to resign because of party splits and is replaced by Surya Bahadur Thapa.
1998	Thapa stands down because of party splits. GP Koirala returns as prime minister heading a coalition government.
1999	Fresh elections give majority to Nepali Congress Party. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai becomes prime minister.
2000	Prime Minister Bhattarai steps down after revolt in Nepali Congress Party. GP Koirala returns as prime minister, heading the ninth government in 10 years.

2001 February	Stiff agitation against GP Koirala asking him to resign citing his implication in a bribery scandal with Lauda Air and his inability to maintain law and order. Parliament disrupted for three weeks.
2001 March	Both government and Maoists unofficially consider peace talks. Kofi Annan visits Nepal. UML and the Maoists hold joint rallies denouncing Koirala.
2001 April	General strike called by Maoist rebels brings life in much of the country to a virtual standstill; police arrest anti-government demonstrators, including some opposition leaders, in Kathmandu. Koirala deploys army with the King's consent to protect development projects as a part of Integrated Security and Development Package.
2001 1 June	King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and other close relatives killed in shooting spree by drunken Crown Prince Dipendra, who then shoots himself.
2001 4 June	Prince Gyanendra crowned King of Nepal after the late King Birendra's son, Dipendra—who had been declared king on 2 June—died of injuries sustained during the palace shooting. Violent demonstrations erupt as Maoists and non-Maoists express confusion over the killings. Curfew in Kathmandu.
2001 July	Maoist rebels step up campaign of violence. Sher Bahadur Deuba becomes prime minister, heading the 11th government in 11 years, after Girija Prasad Koirala quits over the violence.
2001 July	Deuba announces peace with rebels even before taking the oath, truce begins.
2001 September	Second round peace talks. India calls Maoists terrorists.
2001 November	Maoists unilaterally say peace talks have failed, truce is no longer justified. Launch coordinated attacks on army and police posts.
2001 November	State of emergency declared after more than 100 people are killed in four days of violence. King Gyanendra orders army to crush the Maoist rebels.
2002 February	Maoists kill 127 in weekend raids on several government targets.

2002 April	Maoist rebels order five-day national strike, days after hundreds are killed in two of bloodiest attacks of six-year rebellion.
2002 May	Intense clashes between military and rebels in the west killing more than 300 in a week. Rebels declare one-month ceasefire, rejected by government calling it untrustworthy. Deuba visits Britain and other states, seeking help in the war against Maoist rebels. Parliament dissolved, fresh elections called amid political confrontation over extending the state of emergency. Deuba expelled by his Nepali Congress party, heads interim government, renews emergency.
2002 October	Deuba asks king to put off elections by a year because of Maoist violence. King Gyanendra dismisses Deuba by calling him 'incompetent' and indefinitely puts off elections set for November. Lokendra Bahadur Chand appointed to head government.
2003 January	Maoist gunmen assassinate head of Armed Police Force; King ends 'state of emergency'; Rebels, government declare ceasefire and negotiation begins
2003 May/June	Lokendra Bahadur Chand resigns as prime minister. King appoints his own nominee Surya Bahadur Thapa as new premier.
2003 August	Rebels pull out of peace talks with government and end seven-month truce. Maoists attack all over country
2003 September	Rebels call three-day general strike in September.
2004 March	Maoist attack on Bhojpur bazaar (29 security personnel killed); attack on Beni
2004 April	Nepali Congress and Communist Party of Nepal UMN begin massive protests over king's seizure of power. Demand return to democracy. Met with force and thousands of arrests.
2004 May	Royalist Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa resigns.
2004 June	King Gyanendra reappoints Sher Bahadur Deuba as prime minister.
2004 August	Maoist rebels stage week-long blockade of Kathmandu, stopping supplies from reaching the city.

	Twelve Nepalese hostages in Iraq are murdered by their captors, sparking violent protests in Kathmandu.
2005 1 February	King Gyanendra dismisses Prime Minister Deuba and his government, declares a state of emergency and assumes direct power, citing the need to defeat Maoist rebels.
2005 April	office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) established/ King lifts the state of emergency on 30 April.
2005 September	Maoists announce 3 month long ceasefire; later extended to 4 months
2005 November	12 point agreement between the political parties and the Maoists in Delhi to restore democracy.
2006 January	Rebels announce end of 4 month long ceasefire.
2006 February	King holds municipal elections, which are boycotted by the opposition.
2006 April	Opposition alliance calls off weeks of strikes and protests against the direct rule of the king after the monarch agrees to reinstate parliament. GP Koirala is appointed as prime minister. Maoist rebels call a three-month ceasefire.
2006 May	Parliament votes unanimously to curtail the king's political powers. The government and Maoist rebels begin peace talks, the first in nearly three years.
2006 June	Rebel leader Prachanda and PM Koirala hold talks—the first such meeting between the two sides—and agree that the Maoists should be brought into an interim government.
2006 September	Parliament strips the king of his command over the army.
2006 November	The government and Maoists sign a peace accord, declaring a formal end to a 10-year rebel insurgency. The rebels are to join a transitional government and their weapons will be placed under UN supervision.

ANNEX II

Interview Guide (for programme staff and aid advisors)

Please tell me about the overall aim of your organization? What are the specific objectives?

What are the current programmes of your organisation?

What are the various activities?

Has there been a focus in agricultural development? Tell me about it.

Why has there been focus on natural resources? Tell me about it.

Have you noted population mobility in your programme areas? What forms? What is the pattern? Tell me about it.

Have you collected information on them? Tell me about it

What do you/your organisation think about population mobility? Why do people in your program areas move/migrate?

Does the fact that population is mobile play a role in programme planning and design?

ANNEX III

सर्भेक्षण (जिविकोपार्जन तथा बसांइ सराई/गतिशीलता संबन्धमा)

जीबन राज शर्मा, तानसेन पाल्पा

१. घरपरिवार सम्बन्धि जानकारी

अन्तवार्ता लिएको मिति : ठेगाना : घरामुलीको नाम : जात : धर्म :

पारिवारिक लगत

SN	परिवारका सदस्यको नाम	घरमुलिसितको सम्बन्ध	उमेर	लिङ्ग	शिक्षा	बैवाहिक स्थति	पेशा	घरमा उपस्थति	गएको ठांउ	अवधि	उद्वेश्य

२ के तपाई स्थानिय वासिन्दा हुनुहुन्छ १. हो, २. होइन, ९. थाहा छैन ३. यदि स्थानिय होइन भने कुन (जिल्ला/ठांउ) बाट बसाइ सर्नु भएको हो ?

४ घरको किसिम .....

५. घरायसी आम्दानी तथा खर्चको विवरण

आम्दानीका श्रोतहरु	मासिक आम्दानी रु सालाखाला	खर्चको विवरण	मासिक खर्च रु साला खाला
कृषि तथा पशुजन्य उत्पादन		खाना	
नोकरी		केटाकेटीको शिक्षा	
साना व्यवसाय		स्वास्थय उपचार	
ज्याला मजदुरी		लत्ता कपडा	
घरभाडा		अन्य घरखर्च	
पेन्सन			
विविध			
जम्मा		जम्मा	

६.	प्राथमिकताको आधारमा तपाईको परिवारको मुख्य आयश्रोत कुन हो ?	.....कृषि,.....नोकरी,.....व्यापार.....ज्यालादारी..... ..... अन्य.....

७. कृषि सम्बन्धि विवरण

जग्गाको किसिम	क्षेत्रफल, रोपनी	जग्गाको स्वामित्वको किसिम			जग्गा रहेको स्थान	सिचाईको सुविधा	कैफियत
		आफै खेती गरेको	कमाउन दिएको	कमाउन लिएको			
खेत							
बारी							

८.	फलफुल खेती गर्नु भएको छ ?	१. खानको निमित्त छ २. बेच्नको निमित्त छ छ भने आम्दानी कति हुन्छ	
९	तरकारी खेती गर्नु भएको छ ?	१. खानको निमित्त छ २. बेच्नको निमित्त छ छ भने आम्दानी कति हुन्छ	
१०.	तपाई पशु पालनमा पनि संलग्न हुनु हुन्छ ?	१. खानको निमित्त छ २. बेच्नको निमित्त छ छ भने आम्दानी कति हुन्छ	
११.	खेती लगाउदा मजदुरी/खेताला कहा बाट ल्याउनुहुन्छ ?	१. आफ्नै घरबाट २. गाउ समुदायमा पर्मा लगाएर ३. गाउ समुदायबाट पैशा तिरेर ४. बाहिरबाट पैशा तिरेर ८. अन्य - खुलाउने	
१२.	समुदायमा एक दिनको चलेको ज्याला कति चलेको छ ?	१. महिलालाई रु २. पुरुषलाई रु	
१३	वर्षभरीको आम्दानी र खर्चको स्थिति कस्तो छ ?	१. वर्ष भरी खान लाउन मात्र पुग्छ २. बचत हुन्छ ३. खान लाउन अपुग हुन्छ	
१४	खान लाउन अपुग भए कसरी पुराउनु हुन्छ ?	१. ऋण लिने २. साना तिना मौसमी कामहरु गर्ने ३. बसाई सराइ बाट भएको आम्दानी ४. अन्य	
१५	तपाईको विचारमा कृषि उत्पादकत्व कस्तो रहेको छ ?	१.पहिलेको जस्तै २.घट्दो छ ३.बढ्दो छ ९. थाहा छैन	
१६	विगत १ वर्षमा तपाईले कुनै ऋण लिनु भएको छ ?	१. छ, २.छैन	
१७	लिएको छ भने कहाबाट लिनुभएको हो ?	१. साहु/महाजन	

		२. समुदायमा सापटी ३. गैर सरकारी संस्था ४. सरकारी बैक/संस्था ८.अन्य	
१८	यदि लिएको भए कुन शर्तमा लिनु भएको थियो ? प्रष्ट खुलाउनुहोश		

१९. तपाइको नाता/ नजिकैका कोहि बसांइ सराइ गर्नु भएको छ? १. छ, २. छैन
छ भन्ने, यसबारेमा केहि बताइदिनुहोस् (को, कहा, कसरी, कहिले)

२०. तपाई कहिल्यै बाहिर बसांइ सराइ गर्ने बारे सोच्नु भएको थियो, छ? १. छ, २. छैन
छैन भन्ने, यसका कारण के हुन्

थियो भन्ने, यसका कारण के हुन। किन बसांइ सराइ गर्नु भएन।

२१ तपाइको परिवारबाट रोजगार/अन्य कामको निमित्त बाहिर गएका हरु किन त्यहि काम/ठाउ मा गएका होलान ?

२२ तपाइको परिवारबाट रोजगार/अन्य कामको निमित्त बाहिर गएका हरु शुरुमा कसरी गएका होलान, को संग गएका ?

२३ यिनिहरु कतिमा घर आउने गर्दछन्, कति समय बस्ने गर्दछन ?

२४ के यिनिहरुले पैसा वा अन्य केहि ल्याउछन वा पठाउछन्, कति ल्याउछन ?

२५ ल्याएको पैसा के के मा खर्च गर्ने गर्नु भएको छ?

२६ के उनिहरुले बाहिर रहेको बेलामा चिठी/ फोन गर्ने गर्नु भएको छ?

२७ तपाइले घरका सदस्य यसरी बाहिर जांदा आफ्नो इच्छा वा घरको इच्छाले जानु भएको हो ?

२८ तपाइले घरका सदस्य यसरी बाहिर जानुलाइ कसरी हेर्नुभएको छ? तपाइको विचारमा यसको फाइदा, बेफाइदा के होला?

Household Survey on Livelihoods and Migration/Mobility (Translated version)

Jeevan Raj Sharma, Tansen, *Palpa*

1. household information

Date: Address: Name of the HoH: caste/ethnicity: religion:

Family constellation

SN	Name	Relations with HoH	Age	Sex	Education	Marital status	Occupation	Present/ absent	Destination (where?	Duration	purpose

2. Are you a local resident? 1. Yes 2. No 9.DK/NA 3.If not, where do you moved from?

4. Type of house.....

5. Household income/expenditure

Sources of income	Monthly income	Expenses	Monthly expenses
Agriculture		Food	
employment		Children's Education	
Business		Health	
Wage labour		Clothing	
Renting house/land		Other household expenses	
Pension			
Others			
Total		Total	

6.	In terms of priority, please tell us the major source of household income	...agriculture,.....employment.....business .....wage labour,.....others

7. Description of agriculture

Type of land	Area (ropani)	Ownership type			Location of the land	Irrigation	Other Details
		Self	Share crop (given)	Share crop (taken)			
khet							
bari							

8.	Fruits?	1. for consumption 2. for sell how much?	
9.	Vegetables?	1. for consumption 2. for sell how much?	
10.	Livestock?	1. for consumption 2. for sell how much?	
11.	Where do you get the labourers for farming?	1. household 2. community (reciprocal) 3. community(cash) 4. outside (cash) 5. others.....	
12.	What is the rate of wage labour/day?	1. male..... 2. female.....	
13.	What is the situation of income/expenditure for the entire year?	1. sustenance 2. saving 3. not enough for sustenance	
14.	How do you manage if it is not enough for sustenance?	1. loan 2. seasonal work 3. move out in search of work 4.	
15.	How is the agricultural productivity?	1. same as earlier 2. decreasing 3. increasing 9. DK/NA	

16.	Have you taken loan in last one year?	1. Yes 2. No	
17.	If yes, where did you take loan from?	1. local money lender 2. relatives/friends 3. NGOs/CBOs 4. bank 8. others	
18.	If yes, what was the condition?		

19. Has any of your relative shifted the settlement? Yes/No
    If yes, tell us about it (who, where, how and when?)

20. Have you ever though of shifting the settlement? Yes/No
    If no, tell us the reasons?

    If yes, tell us the reasons?

21. Has anyone from your family moved out of the household for employment? If yes, why did they go to that place?

22. Whom did they go with? How did they go?

23. How often do they come home, how long do they stay?

24. Do they send/bring money or goods back home?

25. How do you spend such money?

26. Do they make phone calls or send letters?

27. When your family member left home; how was the decision taken?

28. How do you see the movement of your family member for employment? What according to you are the advantages and disadvantages of this?

ANNEX IV

GUIDELINES FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY

Assumptions
I propose to undertake the fieldwork, under the following assumptions concerning safety and security:

1. There is no direct confrontation between the security forces and the insurgents in the study area.
2. There is no personal threat to myself and my participants.
3. There is no special (military or otherwise) operation by the military and/or the insurgents in the study area and/or the subjects of the study.
4. There are no restrictions on freedom of movement in my study area.
5. I have access to people, places, organisations and documents I want to study.
6. I can ensure anonymity of the participants and respect confidentiality in the collected data/information.
7. I will not be threatened to enter and conduct the fieldwork site by the conflict parties (State administration and the insurgents).
8. I will not be asked to leave the field by the participants and/or by the parities involved in war.

These assumptions have been developed by making close observation to the ongoing political developments in Nepal. If any of these assumptions do not remain the same while beginning to conduct or while conducting the fieldwork, I may have to suspend my fieldwork for some time or terminate it, depending upon the situation.

Preventive Measures
The following preventive measures will be taken to avoid risks and ensure safety and security during my fieldwork.

1. Selection of a safe and secure area.
2. Close monitoring of the conflict, both at the local, regional and central level.
3. Consultation with locals and people at the district level before travelling to the villages.
4. Carrying radio and listening to the news.
5. Avoid participation in any political debate during the fieldwork.
6. Avoid use of any statements or discussions that could provoke political or conflict related discussions in public.
7. Carry a formal letter from the district administration (with copies to security forces) confirming my research student status.
8. Always carry the identity card and student card.
9. Avoid any activity that may look suspicious to the conflict parties.
10. Stay in touch with the family and other people that I know. Let them know about my physical movement and presence in the fieldwork areas. For instance: where I am going be on different days.

11. Avoid staying over nights close to the offices of security forces or government offices.
12. Avoid travelling in vehicles which belongs to the government or security forces.
13. Avoid attending or being present, close to small or large scale gathering of the insurgents like speech, training, meeting etc.

Security Assessment Guidelines

Risk/Threat Level	*Characteristics*	*My response*
Low threat: situation in the field is more or less similar to the assumptions listed above.	- insurgents are operating underground. - security situation has deteriorated and small events have occurred or possibility to occur in near future. - possible for outsiders to visit the area. - voluntary organisations working in the area. development project staffs visit the community and the area.	conduct the fieldwork as planned by taking necessary security measures to minimize the risks.
Medium threat: the situation in the field has changed a little, thus, some of the assumptions listed above do not remain the same.	- insurgents are more visible and operate openly. - people are hesitant to talk and wary of strangers.	conduct the fieldwork under extreme care and assessing all possible risks; may have to leave the field in between and continue later.
High/active threat: the situation in the field has changed and security situation has deteriorated but there are possibilities that things will improve soon. Many of the assumptions do not remain.	- formal and informal curfew in the area. - disruption of transport and communication services. -suspension of development programmes in the area. - sense of a formal or informal large scale mobilisation and of the security forces or the insurgents to fight against each other. - forceful abduction of people for different reasons. - researcher is demanded for money, information related to war or any other form of support.	suspend the fieldwork for the time being. may have to terminate the fieldwork depending on the developments.
Threat of direct target: the situation in the field has changed drastically and most of the assumptions listed above do not remain the same.	- there are frequent fights between the security forces and the insurgents. - abduction of human rights activities, journalists or researchers take place. - complete break down of law and order - direct demand of the security forces and the insurgents to leave the field. - there is a direct threat to my own security and security of my informants.	leave the field permanently. and consider alternative design.

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